BUDDHISM

CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Edited by
PAUL WILLIAMS

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Critical Concepts in Religious Studies

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Volume II

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Theravāda Doctrine

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THERAVĀDA BUDDHIST SANGHA

Some general observations on historical and political factors in its development

Heinz Bechert

Source: *Journal of Asian Studies* 29 (1970): 761–78.

Max Weber has tried to analyze the history of the Sangha from the "unstructured" early orders of monks and nuns to the stage of large-scale monastic "landlordism" by using the theorem of Buddhism as a means of the "domestication of the masses" for the kings of India, Ceylon, and Southeast Asia.[1] Monastic Buddhism of the Theravāda type was believed to have been used by the kings in order to establish what is defined as a "hydraulic society" by Wittfogel. Similar interpretations are found in a number of modern studies on the history of Buddhism. This explanation of the development is certainly one-sided, and a more balanced analysis of the interaction of different factors of change of the Buddhist monastic institutions seems necessary. For this, the concepts of Buddhist historiography should be taken into consideration.

Concepts of Buddhist historical writing

The development from the early Buddhist Sangha to the modern monastic communities in the countries professing Theravāda Buddhism is fortunately rather well documented in historical materials, including Buddhist historical writings, whereas similar material is extremely scarce for the history of Buddhism in mainland India. The chronicles of Ceylon composed by Buddhist bhikkhus (monks) can be considered as the most ancient pieces of existing historical writing composed in the environment of Indian culture.

One is tempted to explain the development of historical writing in Ceylon as a consequence of Buddhist concepts. There is, however, the fact that no piece of fully developed historical literature of Buddhists in mainland India has come down to us and that the negative evidence of recent manuscripts finds (Gilgit manuscripts, Turfan manuscripts, Sanskrit manuscripts discovered by Rāhul Sānkrityāyan from Tibet, etc.) has corroborated the presumption that there were only more or less isolated records of important events in the history of the

Buddhist church and some short historical chapters in books otherwise containing legendary material in Indian Buddhist tradition. Such also has been the material which was taken over into the earliest Sinhalese tradition, but in Ceylon it has been developed into full-fledged historiography. Later Southeast Asian Buddhist historical writing was stimulated by the tradition of Ceylon, as is well known.

As I have shown elsewhere,[2] a critical study of the earliest extant Ceylonese chronicles—*Dīpavaṃsa* (4th or 5th century A.D.) and *Mahāvaṃsa* (about 500 A.D.)—reveals the part played by the political concept of the national identity of the Sinhalese in close connection with the religious tradition of Theravāda Buddhism, i.e., the concept of the identity of the Sinhalese Buddhists. Side by side with this basically political idea, certain concepts of Sangha history are reflected in the early Ceylonese chronicles as well as in all later historical works from Theravāda Buddhist countries. Firstly, we should refer to the importance of the historical succession of ordination traditions (*paramparā*) for the validity of the ordination of Buddhist monks and thereby for the charisma of the religious communities concerned. The erection of new "*sīmās*," i.e., ceremonially consecrated places where ordination rites can be performed, the renewal of doubtful "*upasampadās*," i.e., higher or bhikkhu ordinations, which led to the establishment of new "*nikāyas*," i.e., "sects" of the Order, can be justified by historical traditions only. Another related basic concept in the ecclesiastical history of Theravāda Buddhism is the concept of "*sāsana reform*," i.e., the reform of the monastic communities[3] in accordance with the legal principles laid down in the *Vinaya* or *Vinayapiṭaka*, the canonical law of the Sangha.[4]

According to the Vinaya, any monk who violates the basic commands of monastic discipline, the so-called *pārājika* principles, is automatically excluded from the Sangha.[5] By way of this rule, "pseudo-monks" came into existence. These were persons who pretended to be monks though they had lost their membership in the Sangha as a result of violations against the *pārājika* rules. Since each new ordination required the presence of a certain number of validly ordained monks, it could happen that new ordinations became doubtful as to their validity if the good moral conduct of the ordaining monks was doubted.

Situations in which the decay of monastic discipline resulted in a serious jeopardizing of the survival of a legal Sangha have frequently occurred in the history of Theravāda Buddhism. It has been one of the favored essential topics of Buddhist historical writing to show how orthodox Buddhism managed to cope with this problem. The earliest—and, as a work of literature, the best—coherent work of ecclesiastical history in Sinhalese language, the *Nikāyasangrahava* composed by the Mahāthera Dharmakīrti II (14th century), gives an excellent survey of the history of Buddhism with regard to this aspect.

Methods of sāsana reform

According to the traditional records, the task of keeping the *sāsana* intact devolved upon the Sangha immediately after the Buddha's death, when a monk

called Subhadda frankly declared to be delighted that the master was no longer there to make life difficult for the monks through his principles and interdictions, and that they were now free to do as they pleased.[6] The meeting of honorable monks which laid down the holy transmissions and thereby produced the basis for the collections of holy scriptures is said to have been summoned as a reaction against this attitude of laxity. This earliest institution created to combat the forces of decay within the Sangha is the Buddhist "council." The Pāli term *sangīti* or *sangāyanā* which is used to describe this kind of meeting means "common recitation." A Buddhist "council" is a meeting of a great number of respected monks who have set themselves to the task of fixing the sacred texts or of keeping their transmission pure.[7]

For the history of Theravāda Buddhism, the so-called Third Buddhist Council at Pāṭaliputra[8] was most important. The events preceding this council are fairly well known, and they clearly show a sequence of sāsana reform and council. King Aśoka, who was very much concerned about the decaying moral conduct in the great *vihāras* (monasteries), purged the order from unrestrained monks and in this way effected the first purification of the Sangha (*sāsanavisodhanā*), implemented with the help of the authority of the state. He did this in a way consistent with the principles prescribed by the *vinaya* and, as far as the circumstances permitted, with minimum interference into the internal affairs of the Sangha.[9] After the individual Sanghas (of whom many had been divided as a result of *sanghabheda*, i.e., "splitting of the Order" or "schism") were reunited in this manner, a meeting of one large section of the Order took place under the leadership of Moggaliputta Tissa. At this meeting, the sacred texts were recited. By a comparison of the accounts in the Ceylonese chronicles and in the Pāli commentaries with the pertinent inscription of Aśoka (the so-called "Schism Edict"), the historical facts can be traced.[10]

Buddhism was brought to Ceylon during the time of Aśoka and under his patronage. Thus, naturally, his action for the purity of the Sangha became the leading example for the policies of the kings of Ceylon toward the monastic community. At the same time, the principles of a Buddhist political theory he developed became the basis of Buddhist political theory in the Buddhist kingdom of Ceylon and, later, in the Buddhist states of Southeast Asia. There is however in many of the recent studies a basic misunderstanding of the influence of Aśoka's ideology in Theravāda countries. It was, of course, not the tolerant Aśoka who tried to develop a "dharma" generally acceptable in a multi-religious society—that is, the Aśoka we know from his inscriptions—that influenced the thinking of later periods. The inscriptions were rediscovered and read only in the 19th and 20th century. Buddhists in the Theravāda countries only knew Aśoka as depicted in Pāli commentaries and chronicles, namely, Aśoka as a follower and partisan of the Theravāda school. By an analysis of the traditions concerning his sāsana reform, it is possible to trace how the historical Aśoka was transformed in the traditional records into a sectarian of the Pāli school.[11]

By this transformation, the foundation was laid for the ideology of

state-Sangha relations in Theravāda countries; this proved historically relevant in that history was made by historians in early Ceylon. Whereas Hīnayāna Buddhism lost its importance and finally disappeared in most parts of mainland India, kings in Ceylon and Southeast Asia who had come under the influence of this Aśokan ideology felt the obligation to defend Theravāda in two ways: first, they prevented the influence of doctrinal deviations from the orthodox faith and, second, they had monks expelled who violated the basic rules of monastic law. Of course, this was done not only for religious reasons but also for political interest, as we shall see. And such reforms of the Sangha were not of lasting success either; they had to be repeated regularly. In addition, the chronicles tell us that they were not easily effected. To mention only one example, the undisciplined monks who were excluded from the Sangha by the sāsana reform measures of King Silāmeghavaṇṇa (619–628) of Ceylon formed a conspiracy and murdered the pious monk who had instigated the reform.[12]

After King Vijayabāhu I (1055–1110) had liberated Ceylon from foreign rule, he discovered that the minimum of five validly ordained bhikkhus who could celebrate an upasampadā as prescribed in the Vinaya could not be brought together in the whole island. Therewith a situation had arisen in which it was no longer possible to renew the Sangha of Ceylon on the basis of its own ecclesiastical body. Here we witness for the first time a new type of sāsana reform, the reintroduction of the ordination tradition from another country, in this case from Burma. It is important to note that the old division of the Sangha into three nikāyas or "sects" survived although members of all three now represented one and the same upasampadā tradition.[13] Thus, the indigenous structures of monastic law and juridical interrelations of the different vihāras were not at all affected by the introduction of a new paramparā of ordination from abroad. Similarly, nearly seven centuries later, the then traditional structure of two branches of the Order—*gāmavāsin* or "village monks" and *araññavāsin* or "forest monks"—survived the breakdown of the upasampadā tradition and its renewal, when the Syāma-Nikāya was formed after the reintroduction of the upasampadā from Siam in the year 1753. Since that time, the two old branches were continued as the two branches of the Syāma-Nikāya, Malvatta, and Asgiriya.[14]

An important step toward a central administration of the Sangha in the kingdom was made by the sāsana reform enacted by King Parākramabāhu I (1153–1186). The old structure of three nikāyas (Mahāvihāravāsin, Abhayagirivāsin, and Jetavanavāsin) was done away with. It is interesting, however, that no "head of the Order," or *sangharāja*, was formally nominated although Mahākāśyapa acted practically as a head of the Sangha when he formulated the text of a *katikāvata*, a lawbook for the Sangha. The katikāvata, however, was finally enacted not in a Sangha council but by royal order. Buddhism had been integrated into the state in such a way that the king was legally entitled to promulgate a lawbook for the Sangha. This text claims to have been formulated in agreement with dharma and vinaya, i.e., with the canonical laws. Its contents did, however, positively deviate from the canonical law by contain-

ing a number of additional precepts not found in the ancient texts and even some new rules which contradicted canonical law. In spite of this, the katikāvata has been accepted as a basic lawbook for the Sangha of Ceylon by the bhikkhus themselves.[15]

King Parākramabāhu II (1236–1271) issued the so-called *Dambadeṇi Katikāvata*. In this document we find detailed references to the organizational structure of the Ceylonese Sangha which from that time remained essentially unmodified up to the end of the Sinhalese kingdom. This structure has formed the basis of Sangha organization for Ceylon and Southeast Asian Buddhism up until today. The Sangha of Ceylon was at that time divided into two sections: *gāmavāsin* (village monks) and *araññavāsin* (forest monks). Each of these sections was headed by a *mahāsthavira* who was the president of a central council or *kārakasanghasabhā*. These two mahāsthaviras were elected not by the particular section but by the leading theras (elders in the Order) of both sections so that, in spite of the practical division of the Sangha, the juridical unity was represented by the two mahāsthaviras. One of them was appointed *mahāsvāmi*—(called *sangharāja* since the 15th century). Together the two mahāsthaviras (later called *mahānāyakas* resp. *mahānāyakatheras*) exercised considerable authority and powers over the *gaṇas*, i.e., groups of vihāras or monastic units, and the vihāras, headed in turn by a *vihārādhipati*.[16]

Thus, a highly developed hierarchical structure came into being. In it, the Sangha was incorporated or integrated within the framework of the state.

Ideology of state–Sangha relations

How did this structure fit into the state ideologies of the Buddhist kingdoms? Much has been written about the ideological concepts underlying the state structure in Southeast Asia. Four concepts—or rather ways of action—of kingship have been described: first, the king is a "*cakravartin*," i.e., a universal monarch as described in canonical Buddhist texts; second, he is a "*bodhisatva*," a Buddha-to-be, an identification developed under the impact of Mahāyāna Buddhism; third, he is a promotor and protector of orthodox Theravāda like Aśoka; and fourth, he is a "*devarāja*," a god-king in the Hindu tradition. Each of these elements could be defined as ways of action: the "cakravartin" is the emperor of universal peace, the "bodhisatva" leads all beings on their way to final salvation, the "new Aśoka" protects the Sangha and the holy traditions, and the "devarāja" is bound to the *rājadharma*, i.e., the moral precepts of kingship as described in the Hindu sacred books, the *Purāṇas* and *Dharmaśāstras*, and reflected in the "*dasa rājadhamma*" of Buddhist Jātaka tales. These ideas were essential for the building of state and society in Indian Buddhist tradition, and they were very useful for the justification of state power and for the charismatic appeal of the ruler, though not for practical politics.

But Indian tradition did provide a system of politics free from religious ideology as a system of political science, namely, that of the *Kauṭalāya-Arthaśāstra*.

We read in this comprehensive guidebook for politicians that they were taught to make use of religious beliefs and institutions for political ends, for example, to exploit the faith of the people in deities and thus replenish the empty treasury, to appropriate temple property, to induce an enemy to come out from a fort for the performance of religious rites and murder him when he has come out for the purpose, etc.[17] And we have evidence that Kauṭalya's book was read and used for the instruction of princes in Ceylon and Burma.[18] It reminds us of the principles laid down in this book when we learn that in the 18th century a plot was worked out to murder a king of Ceylon during a religious festival.[19]

Indian culture thus provided the tradition of divine kingship, but it gave also a tradition of purely secular statecraft which freed the ruler from all eventual restrictions resulting from divine kingship—a dualism which must be considered to understand state-Sangha relations.

In this context, it is clear that the integration of the Sangha was worked out within the tradition of rational politics, but it had to be justified in terms of religious ideology. This could be done by emphasizing the necessity to protect the Sangha from decay, i.e., from meddling in "mundane" activities, the Sangha being an institution for purely religious or "supra-mundane" (*lokuttara*) aims. "Undisciplined" was considered synonymous with "worldly" in regard to monks. Therefore, protection of the Sangha was, at the same time, preventing it from taking part in political activities which was forbidden by the rules of vinaya, and at the same time, by reason of state. A hierarchical structure was the best practical means to enforce the control of the Sangha; for it was virtually impossible to keep under control a Sangha which consisted of a large number of non-connected groups of monks.[20]

Changes in the Sangha structure in Ceylon

The hierarchical structure of the Sangha in Ceylon, however, did not survive the lapse of time. It is hardly possible to understand the disintegration of this structure without taking into consideration the political history of the island from the 16th to the 18th century. The political unity was broken up, parts of the island came under the control of colonial powers and there was a general deterioration of the cultural and religious conditions in the free parts of the country. A great part of the literature was lost. Thus, it is not surprising that the Sangha also was affected by general decay. There was no more a strong central authority of the mahāsthaviras or the kārakasanghasabhā. The monarchs did not appoint a mahāsvāmi to prevent the Sangha from becoming a potentially stronger power than their own.

Within the Sangha itself, discipline came virtually to a low point. The reintroductions of the upasampadā from Arakan did not achieve lasting success.[21] So-called "*gaṇinnānsēs*," i.e., priests who had undergone lower ordination or *pabbajjā* only, but not upasampadā (and in many instances had wives and children) inhabited the monasteries of the island. It was with great difficulty that

King Kīrtiśrī-Rājasiṃha and the monk Välivita Saraṇankara could achieve a reform of the Sangha in the middle of the 18th century which was connected with the promulgation of a new katikāvata. Under a comparatively strong government, again a mahāsvāmi or sangharāja was appointed, Saraṇankara. The reform, however, did not go deep enough. Certainly, the "gaṇinnānsēs" had to undergo an ordination, some of them left the Sangha, but in general it seems to have been more or less a compromise.[22]

The greatest hindrance to a throughout reform of the Sangha in Ceylon was formed by the system termed "monastic landlordism" which had developed as a peculiarity of Ceylon Buddhism in a long process which seems to have begun already in the late Anurādhapura period (about the 10th century). The administrative head of a monastery had been elected by its particular Sangha or monastic community and was removable in the early period, but in the course of time the position as a head of a monastery developed step by step into a nearly absolute ownership of the monastery.[23] Though this development was completed only in the 19th century,[24] the rule that the head of a monastery—in official terminology, a *vihārādhipati* or "chief incumbent"—could appoint one of his pupils as his successor, had long before become generally accepted.[25] This so-called "pupillary succession" (*śiṣyānuśiṣyaparamparāva*) was widely used to retain the monasteries in the hand of certain influential families.

For a number of monasteries another rule of succession termed *jñātiśiṣya-paramparāva* or *sivuruparamparāva* became valid. Under this rule only a relative of the deceased vihārādhipati could succeed him. Thus, a layman could be the successor to a deceased monk provided he was ready to take up the robes. Rudiments of this regulation can be traced back to the *Dambadeṇi Katikāvata*.[26] It spread during the period of the gaṇinnānsēs. In this way, the donations of pious kings to the Sangha and the exemption from taxation of Sangha property had, in fact, created property interests of influential groups of the population connected with the monastic endowments. These groups were strong enough to prevent the reform movement from succeeding with the reestablishment of a public and central control over the monastic units to prevent deterioration of the disciplinary and educational standards of the monks as well as the alienation of the income of the monasteries.[27]

Thus, the reform of the 18th century resulted in the formal reestablishment of a valid upasampadā but not in a reform of the administration of the "Buddhist temporalities." In the colonial period, the disintegration continued, though there were repeated attempts to take up the task of providing the Buddhist institutions a working constitution to prevent misuse and misappropriation.[28]

However, the breakdown of the control of the state did not result in decay of the entire Sangha. There were always tendencies for a reform from inside, i.e., for purely religious reasons and motives. The reformist movements called into being by communities which had become influential as a consequence of social change in the early 19th century were closely connected with the controversies of the castes. Already in the *Dambadeṇi Katikāvata* the custom to exclude all

persons who did not belong to the highest caste—the Goyigama caste which is the majority caste of the Sinhalese—from membership in the Sangha and thereby from the material benefits derived from the temple lands is reflected.[29] During the climax of the reform movement in the 18th century, a few non-Goyigamas succeeded to obtain upasampadā, but soon admission to the Sangha was closed for non-Goyigamas again. The main group of the Sangha which was now called Syāma-Nikāya retained this rule after the end of the Sinhalese monarchy. The other castes which had succeeded in gaining considerable economic influence in various parts of the island, reacted by the founding of new nikāyas (Amarapura-Nikāya and its subdivisions, Rāmañña-Nikāya) which introduced their upasampadā from Burma. The further splits which took place within these reformist groups of monks were partially due to religious subtleties and partially due to the resurgence of the caste-consciousness in these new nikāyas.[30]

This deep influence of the caste system, which did not exist in any other country professing Theravāda Buddhism, is one of the striking peculiarities of Ceylon Buddhism compared to that of Southeast Asia. But in addition to this, many of the structures which have no foundation on canonical law, e.g., the aforementioned "pupillary succession" in its Ceylonese form, were taken over from the old or Syāma-Nikāya by many of the new sects which should have avoided it according to their ideology. These structures which had been developed in Ceylon under the social and political conditions of the island had been too suited to these conditions to be done away with, though they were not at all justified by canonical Buddhist law.

Changes of the Sangha structure in Southeast Asia

Let us compare the case of Burma. Here a comparatively well organized hierarchy had been developed in a social environment absolutely different from that in Ceylon. The basic structure of the hierarchical system was quite similar to that of the Ceylonese Sangha to which the Burmese Sangha had close connections since the 11th century. But differently from Ceylon, the kings of Burma had been remarkably successful in their attempts toward bringing the whole Sangha under the control of the central ecclesiastical administration which was itself controlled by the government. There was no fully developed "monastic landlordism" comparable to that of Ceylon monasteries. However, this organizational structure which had depended on the efficiency of the government broke down completely in the colonial period.[31]

Like in Ceylon, in this historical situation, a reform activity from inside the Sangha in the 19th century resulted in the formation of new "sects." We find three types of sects in modern Burmese Buddhism, one type consisting of new nikāyas similar to the reformist nikāyas in Ceylon. The two groups officially recognized as nikāyas in this sense, namely, Dvāra-Nikāya and Shwe-gyin-Nikāya (Rhve-kyaṅ-nikāya), were formed after the middle of the 19th century.

They have built up a well-organized hierarchical structure. In some parts of Burma, these two nikāyas have been split again into subsects with separate hierarchical organizations. The Dvāra-Nikāya is, e.g., divided into two separate nikāyas in Arakan. The "Weluwun sect" (founded 1897) is a subsect split from Shwe-gyin-Nikāya.[32]

The bulk of the Burmese Sangha which had no more functioning organizational structure since the breakdown of the old hierarchical order after the defeat of the Burmese monarchy is called Sudhamma-Nikāya, although it cannot be compared with the two other nikāyas. But there were reformist and organizational developments within the Sudhamma-Nikāya similar to those which led to the establishment of the two other nikāyas and their subsects. Even the Shwe-gyin-Nikāya had been started as a movement within Sudhamma-Nikāya before it was organized as a separate nikāya. Such movements consisted of groups remaining formally within the Sudhamma-Nikāya but building up their own organizations and allegiances. Well-known among these sects are the so-called "Pakkoku sect" and the "Ngettwin sect," the former having played an important part in political activities during U Nu's government. It was virtually more useful for these groups to retain the outward and noncommittal affiliation to Sudhamma-Nikāya in order to be able to speak for "the Sangha" in general in their proclamations.[33] A third type of reformist movement within the framework of the Sudhamma-Nikāya was the Sulagandi (Cūlagaṇḍi) movement in the last decade of the 19th century. This movement tried to push through a stricter observance of certain rules of the vinaya by the Sangha.[34]

The development went along different lines in Thailand and Cambodia. In these countries the responsibility of the state for the welfare and integrity of the Sangha was never questioned and the tendency of the governments to set up a central administration of religious affairs was successful. Basically, the structure and organization of the Sangha in these countries is only different in so far from the older hierarchies in Burma and Ceylon as modern methods of administration and control have been adopted. This is a quite recent development. We know, for example, that of the three divisions of the Sangha of Siam in the 19th century, two belonged to *ganthadhura*, i.e., "the burden (observance) of the study of books (scriptures)," one to *vipassanādhura*, i.e., "the burden of meditation," and these were identical with the definitions of the afore-mentioned *gāmavāsin* and *araññavāsin* in mediaeval Ceylon.[35]

Sāsana reform in East Bengal

I have had recently the opportunity to examine a very interesting case of sāsana reform in East Bengal. Today in the districts of Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts in East Bengal which belong to East Pakistan there is a comparatively small but widespread community of Buddhists which has escaped the interest of Buddhologists so far and, therefore, was practically unknown. This community is of mixed origin comprising elements of surviving Bengal Buddhism and of

Arakanese influence. The main ethnic groups of East Bengal Buddhism are the Baruas living in the plains and the Cākmās in the hill tracts. In the middle of the 19th century, a reform movement was started here. Its head was a Buddhist monk named Sāramitta, a native from Hārbāng, a village south of Chittagong. After completing his studies and attaining high honors in the Sangha in Akyab, the capital of Arakan, he was called back to his home-country by East Bengali Buddhists. The reform movement headed by him had the patronage of Queen Kālindī, who ruled the Cākmā tribe of Chittagong Hill Tracts. Kālindī Rāni could help the spread of the reform movement materially, but not by any authority over the Baruas or Bengali Buddhists who were then direct British subjects.

The almost complete success of the reform movement is surprising if compared with similar movements in Ceylon and Burma. Here, again, the social and political situation was essential: Buddhism in East Bengal existed in a multireligious society, and there were no material interests opposed to the religious reform. The Baruas formed one caste only, so that it was easy to make use of the nearly democratic institutions of the self-government of the caste for the purpose of controlling the Sangha. This control, however, was practically achieved in a dual structure: by local lay administration of the secular affairs of the temples and by a central religious council. The supra-regional Sangha structure could not have been invented in Bengal Buddhism itself. It was taken over from those Buddhist countries where it had been developed as a means to regulate sangha-State relations.

It is remarkable that the small group of bhikkhus who did not take over the new upasampadā tradition introduced by Sāramitta's reform and insisted that the old indigenous Bengali upasampadā should be considered valid, did accept the same strict standards of monastic discipline and the same organizational structure. These monks call their community Mahāthera-Nikāya as opposed to the Sangharāja-Nikāya established by Sāramitta and his followers.

Both nikāyas are headed by a High Priest called *mahānāyakathera* and four deputy high priests or *anunāyakatheras* in the Sangharāja-Nikāya, respectively, one *anunāyakathera* in the Mahāthera-Nikāya. These dignitaries are elected by a general assembly of the monks of the nikāya. Besides these nāyakatheras, each nikāya has a secretary. A *kārakasanghasabhā*, i.e., an acting monastic council under the presidency of the nāyakatheras, exercises monastic jurisdiction and decides over important matters. The members of the *kārakasanghasabhā* are elected for a period of three years by all monks of the nikāya in the general council of the Order or *mahāsanghasabhā*, whereas the nāyakatheras are elected for life. The *kārakasanghasabhā* of the Sangharāja-Nikāya consists of thirty monks, that of the Mahāthera-Nikāya of eleven monks. The *mahāsanghasabhā* of the Sangharāja-Nikāya meets annually, that of the Mahāthera-Nikāya once in three years. The Sangharāja-Nikāya has an additional regional structure of fifteen regional branches to which the monasteries are affiliated. Ten of these branches are situated in Chittagong district, two in Comilla district. Each of the

three circles of Chittagong Hill Tracts forms one branch and is headed by the respective *rājguru* ("royal teacher") who is appointed by the rāja of the circle, namely, the Cākmā Rāja in Rāngāmāṭī, the Bohmong Rāja in Bandarban, and the Mong Rāja in Manikcheri. It should be added here that nearly all the monks in Chittagong Hill Tracts are members of the Sangharāja-Nikāya.

The organization of the monasteries is closely connected with that of the nikāya. In most cases, the eldest or the most educated disciple of a deceased head monk follows him as the head monk or vihārādhipati of the monastery. This pupillary succession is not, however, a general rule as in Ceylon. It is only a custom which is followed in most cases. In principle, it is in the power of the kārakasanghasabhā of the nikāya to appoint the new head monk. Practically, the kārakasanghasabhā has to decide only in the rare cases of dispute.

At present, quite a number of monasteries in East Bengal are not inhabited by a monk. In such a case, the lay Buddhists of the village, i.e., their Buddhist Vihar Committee, can invite any monk of their choice to stay in the vihāra of the village. Again, the kārakasanghasabhā is asked to confirm this appointment.

Monastic jurisdiction is in the authority of the kārakasanghasabhā. If a monk violates basic rules of conduct he can be expelled from the Sangha by this assembly. In such a case, no layman will present anything to this monk so that he is forced to give up the robes. Whereas many of the larger monasteries in Ceylon have been provided with land grants and other regular income by their donators, Buddhist vihāras in East Bengal rarely have any landed property except the ground on which monastery and temple itself are situated. Therefore, the monks are entirely dependent on the lay population for their livelihood. Whenever there is larger income of a vihāra, it is administrated by a lay trustee (*kappiyakāraka*) or the village temple committee. In consequence of this state of affairs, the Buddhist monks of East Bengal are in a certain sense under the control of laymen. It is not possible here for a monk to lead a layman's life without leaving the order.[36]

Here, the organizational structure developed in the Buddhist monarchies was adopted and transformed by a quasi-democratic community and it did work as one can see from a study of the present situation of the Sangha in East Bengal. The existence of a structural model which could be taken over was an historical factor. This model was useful under conditions absolutely different from those under which it had been developed in Ceylon and Burma, whereas it was not workable in Ceylon and Burma itself once the old political system had broken down. On the other hand, Indian Buddhists of old had not been able to create such a system of Sangha-laity relations in Indian Buddhism as the Jaina communities had done. This is agreed upon as one of the main factors contributing to the decay of Buddhism in India.

Ancient canonical law and modern organizational structures

The structures of hierarchical organization described so far are not those of the canonical Buddhist law. Though the Buddha had allowed the Sangha to abolish minor rules,[37] the first Buddhist Council resolved that the Sangha does not alter the Buddha's laws.[38] This decision is considered binding by all orthodox Buddhists. Therefore, it was possible to doubt whether the new hierarchical and regional organization of the Sangha was legal or not from the point of view of vinaya.[39] Practically, a dual structure had come into existence in the historical development of the Theravāda Sangha: it was organized along more modern organizational lines, but it had to keep the old structures as prescribed by the vinaya. The new structures were necessary, no doubt, for the survival of the Sangha—but the old one had to be preserved in order to make the proceedings of the Sangha lawful. They represented historical factors which could not have been left behind in an historically conscious society.

With the post-vinaya organizational structure, Theravāda Buddhism had found a way to deal with new tasks which had not existed during the time of the codification of the laws of vinaya. Many of these new duties had evolved for the Sangha when it had become the leading agency for the preservation of the culture and literature of the country, and when the Sangha took over the responsibility of the education of the male youth, etc. This development was because in Southeast Asia—and partly even in Ceylon—there had not existed an indigenous class of literati as was the case in India proper.

In addition to this responsibility for the education, the Sangha had to offer religious benefits for the lay people, e.g., the protective power of recitation of the socalled *paritta* texts.[40] Here I should mention that Theravāda Buddhism has incorporated some noncanonical beliefs which were of great importance for this development, e.g., the theorem of the transmission of religious merit to the deceased (*puññānumodanā* and *pattidāna*).[41] On the basis of this concept, the monks participated in funerals, and religious gifts in commemoration of the ancestors were donated to the Sangha. This too helped to develop the Sangha into a factor of social life.

The solution of the contradiction of ancient canonical law and modern forms of organization and authority in the religious sphere is effected by a dualism in the life of the Sangha. The ceremonial and legal acts prescribed in the vinaya—the so-called *vinayakarmas*—are performed strictly in accordance with the ancient law. In this way, the validity of these acts is ensured. At the same time, the act of decision and agreement itself which had been the original sense of the vinayakarma is no longer performed during the vinayakarma but before its performance. Thus, the vinayakarmas have become purely ritual acts in which decisions arrived at before are formally enacted. This dualism is led so far that, on the one hand, the performance of the relevant vinayakarma does remain the essential presumption for the validity of relevant juridical acts of canonical law.

On the other hand, however, the presumptions of the validity of a vinayakarma are no longer defined by canonical law but by customary law.

This state of affairs should be taken into account when the importance of Buddhism and the Sangha as a major factor of social and political change in Ceylon and Southeast Asia is evaluated. Modern Theravāda Buddhism, although based on the canonical writings, is not at all identical with canonical Buddhism, but it has preserved the continuity of the historical tradition from the earliest time to the present.

Later Indian Buddhism and its tantric siddhas had done away with all historical burdens; as provocateurs of their period they tried to actualize religious feelings and to get rid of the formalism of historical Buddhist traditions. But in this way they also had removed all factors of order and continuity and their movement did not survive very long. As we have seen before, it was not the great impetus of the siddhas—the "hippies" of medieval Bengal—but the return to the principles of canonical law that enabled Buddhism to survive in parts of Bengal.

Political implications of resurgent Theravāda Buddhism

Students of canonical Buddhism have always emphasized the nonpolitical nature of the Buddha's teachings. Max Weber has described Buddhism as a "specifically non-political and anti-political religion of a social class."[42] No doubt, there are many characteristic elements in early Buddhism to support this statement. However, we have already seen how the Sangha was incorporated into the structure of the traditional Buddhist states. Similarly, the religious factor as an important force within the political and social upheaval in the Buddhist countries of South and Southeast Asia in the recent past is too obvious to be overlooked or disregarded. However, the question remains how far the religious moments in this development can be described as genuinely religious factors or else as religious on its face only.

There can be no doubt that the political role of the religious factors depends to a large degree on the general political and social situation of the countries in question. To make out which peculiar influences are due to a certain religious situation is extremely difficult as nowhere do the religious factors exist isolated from other factors. In this context, a comparative study of societies with similar religious backgrounds can serve a very useful purpose.

At first sight, one would say that the religious background of the Theravāda Buddhist countries is almost identical. We find the same religious literature in Pāli. Even minute points of the interpretation of the teachings of Buddhism are discussed in these books. The life of the Buddhist monks is governed by the same set of rules, etc. This picture, however, is one-sided. Here the basic differences of the popular religions which exist in the several countries of Theravāda Buddhism should be recalled. Popular religion has two aspects here; firstly, popular Buddhism, i.e., religious practices of the peasant population based on the so-called "Great Tradition"[43] of literary Buddhism, but not in full agreement

with the real understanding of the ideas incorporated. Half-magical practices as described in the very popular Ceylonese Pāli book *Rasavāhinī* written by Vedeha in the 13th century can serve as a typical example for popular Buddhism in this sense. Whereas canonical Buddhism is practically the same in the five Theravāda countries, popular Buddhism shows similarities only. The second aspect of popular religion, i.e., the non-Buddhist popular cults of the so-called "Little Tradition" is entirely different in Ceylon, Burma, and Thailand. It is wrong to disregard these differences while examining the importance of the religious factor in regard to social and political change. Buddhism has never influenced political and social developments as a purely religious theory, but always in its actual manifestation, i.e., in an integrated religious system including popular beliefs.

Thus, in addition to the connections of Buddhist religion and state which were discussed above, another set of interrelations of religious institutions and environment has to be considered. Relations of Sangha and state were regulated by the principle that the Buddhist sāsana is in its conception directed towards detachment from worldly affairs, i.e., it is "supra-mundane" (*lokuttara*), whereas the cult of the gods, on the other hand, serves worldly purposes. The cult of the gods is, therefore, essential in a Buddhist state to ensure the welfare of king and people in mundane affairs.

The state cults, therefore, include Buddhist elements as well as cults of gods and magical rites, and a kind of syncretism developed. These elements, however did not merge into a full-type syncretistic religion, but retained their difference within a more or less integrated system. Generally, Brahmins from India were employed as priests at the courts of the kings of Southeast Asia for the performance of state cults and rites. In Southeast Asia basic differences originated between court religions and peasant religion,[44] but there was no similar antagonism in Ceylon. Here, court religion and and popular cults were both of Indian origin or at least of Indian type. Official and popular religion formed a more or less integrated system from earliest times.[45]

The movement of resurgent Buddhism in late 19th and in 20th century has to be understood on this background. Quite from the beginning, Buddhist modernism in Ceylon and Burma was linked to political and social issues. It is sufficient to refer the reader for details to the relevant studies published on this subject recently.[46] Some of the basic principles of the ideology of the so-called "political bhikkhus" of Ceylon were formulated in programmatic documents written in the period from 1945 to 1947. A mahānāyaka of Malvatta, who died in 1945, had written a justification for the political activity of the Sangha, which was published later on in "*The Revolt in the Temple*."[47] Valpaḷa (Walpola) Rāhula published his "*Bhikṣuva-gēurumaya*" in 1946,[48] and the famous declarations "*Bhikṣūn hā deśapālanaya*" (Monks and politics") and the "*Kelaniya Declaration of Independence*" were promulgated in December 1946 and January 1947.[49]

The movement of resurgent Buddhism was, no doubt, in a contradictory ideo-

logical position. The first phase of the reform movement in Ceylon, that of the formation of reformist groups in the Sangha, did not succeed producing a general sāsana reform, on account of the material interests and the structural rigidity of the richly endowed monasteries of the old Sangha group or Syāma-Nikāya in their intrinsic connection with the Sinhalese social system. Monastic landlordism had developed as a characteristic of Sinhalese Buddhism, but under the old system it had been controlled by the state to a certain degree. In the colonial period, these institutions had become private ones. The hopes of Christian missionaries that the decay of these institutions would lead to a gradual disappearance of Buddhist influence did not materialize. On the contrary, the Buddhist cause was taken over by reformist forces who entered the political arena by linking Sinhalese nationalism and Buddhist resurgence. This seemed justified because only an intervention of the state could achieve a reform of the sāsana along traditional lines. The colonial government handed over the control of the Buddhist temporalities to the general Buddhist public in a nearly democratic conception of administration under the *Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance* of 1889 which, however, did not work, because the necessary infra-structure for such a system did not exist. Furthermore, the legislation did not provide any system to prevent misuse of the authority given to the trustees. The Ordinance of 1931 did not serve better the Buddhist interests either.[50]

The issue of sāsana reform was naturally closely linked with the reassertion of Buddhism in general and particularly with the issue of giving Buddhism its "due place" in state and society again. If, on the one hand, in absence of an appropriate organization of the Buddhist laity, only the state had the means for a reform of the Buddhist institutions and, on the other hand, only Buddhists had the right to do anything for the cause of Buddhism, the issue to make Buddhism the state religion seemed to be justified. It was, of course, not practicable in Ceylon which has a multi-religious society, and the corresponding move in Burma, as it is well known, finally failed in 1962 with the take-over of the so-called revolutionary government.[51]

The ideology underlying the reassertion of Buddhism in Ceylon was largely based on the effort to point out the negative consequences of actions of the colonial regime related to the interests represented by Christian missionaries for the development of Buddhism. Already in the writings of the Anagārika Dharmapāla this very principle to explain the decay of Buddhism as a result of foreign influence is used over and again.[52] One of the main arguments used in the so-called "*Buddhist Commission Report*,"[53] in T. Vimalananda's book on the religious policy of the colonial administration[54] and in other similar writings to show how the colonial government had tried to destroy Buddhism is that a great part of the temple lands was alienated. Practically, however, the greater temples have retained considerable landed property. One could conclude that this very fact was detrimental for the cause of the reform of the Sangha for two reasons: firstly, the material or economic interests of the vihārādhipatis of the richly endowed monasteries which were opposed to sāsana reform remained

unchanged; and secondly, any essential change of the structure of the Sangha was prevented thereby.[55]

Another main argument of most writers of resurgent Buddhism in Ceylon is the claim that in the past also the Sangha had been the leader of the social, political and economical progress of the Sinhalese and had guided the politics of the state. G. C. Mendis has described this as "rewriting of history" and has expressed the view that the connection of Sinhalese nationalism and Buddhism is of recent origin.[56] It is correct that direct interference in political affairs was against the canonical and the traditional regulations of the Sangha and that the activities of the political bhikkhus militated against these regulations.[57] However, Mendis' view has to be modified because already the Sinhalese chronicles emphasize the special connection of the Buddhist religion and the Sinhalese people, in the records of the origins of the Sinhalese nation as well as in the so-called "Duṭṭhagāmaṇī epic." The Sangha was understood to have the function of upholding this tradition of "religio-nationalism" as a part of the cultural heritage of the Sinhalese, though it was not expected to actively interfere in practical politics. Thus, a system of political thinking is provided by the Sinhalese historical writers, not in a systematical way, but in the form of examples from the past.[58] The relevant writings of modern Buddhists, therefore, can be said to be in line with the way of thinking of traditional Buddhism, but, of course, not of canonical Buddhism.

Though based more or less on the same tradition of religious literature, the ideology of modern Burmese Buddhism is quite distinct from that of Ceylon. The political lessons drawn from the history of Ceylon were not applicable in Burma. The particular emphasis on Abhidhamma, the scholastic philosophy, in traditional Burmese Buddhism, on the other hand, is reflected in the tendency towards a systematical political theory in modern Burmese Buddhism. The efforts to synthesize Buddhism and Marxism are the most remarkable results of this development.[59]

The direct involvement of larger sections of the Sangha in political affairs in Ceylon as well as in Burma in recent times was connected with an important change of its organizational structure, namely, the emergence of monks' associations outside the traditional structures of the nikāyas. In both countries, the hierarchy of the larger nikāyas professed to be politically noninterested in observance of the rules of vinaya. There was, of course, political influence of the hierarchy behind the stages. But it lay generally in the interest of these privileged groups of monks to prevent rapid political change and therefore, they supported the establishment in one way or the other. They did not have, however, the means to enforce their opinion on other groups of monks, e.g., the monks in the poorly endowed low-country vihāras who were highly interested in political and social change.

Thus, political monks opposed to the hierarchy formed powerful Sangha associations in Burma as early as in 1921. These associations were organized on similar lines as Buddhist laymen's associations, i.e., their structure was influ-

enced by the example of Western missionary organizations. As a result, a new form of dualism in the life of the Sangha came into existence: for monastic and religious matters one had to stick to the traditional nikāya structures—for political and social activity the bhikkhus joined associations with no connection at all to the nikāya organization.[60]

Concluding remarks

It was a long way from the original structure of the early Sangha built on the model of the Sanghas of the kṣatriya republics of the Buddha's period to the medieval hierarchical structure of a Theravāda Sangha under the control of the state. In the early bhikkhu community, control was understood in terms of self-control. The principles of the completeness of the Sangha within a boundary or sīmā, of the necessary unanimity of the Sangha in important matters and the condemnation of "schism" or sanghabheda was believed to be effective to preserve its purity. Not a patriarch, but vinaya and dharma, i.e., the Buddhist law, was to govern the bhikkhu community. We have seen how additional structures were used to make these principles effective in repeated sāsana reforms. To ensure lasting success for the reforms, Buddhist states made use of hierarchical structures and new forms of ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

When the authority of the old Buddhist states broke down in Burma and Ceylon, the Buddhists in theory could have renewed the original quasi-democratic structures with the necessary modifications. They could have done this, had not the interrelation and interdependence of the Sangha with interests of caste and class interest, with economic interests of the bhikkhus as land owners, etc. prevented it. Instead, monks' associations of more or less political character were formed, leading still farther away from the original conception of the Buddhist Sangha. The so-called "Buddhist resurgence" thus did not lead to a sāsana reform in the traditional understanding of the term. It did, however, result in a considerable increase of the political influence of the Buddhist establishment. In East Bengal, on the other hand, a Buddhist community was successful in achieving a sāsana reform, evidently not in spite of the poverty, but on account of the poverty of their monastic institutions.

Notes

1 For a detailed discussion of Weber's opinions see H. Bechert, "Einige Fragen der Religionssoziologie und Strucktur des suedasiatischen Buddhismus," *International Yearbook for the Sociology of Religion* 4 (1968) pp. 251–53. Max Weber's "*Gesammelte Aufsaetze zur Religionssoziologie*," vol. 2, were translated into English under the title "*The Religion of India, The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*" (New York, 1958).

2 H. Bechert, "Ueber den Ursprung der Geschichtsschreibung im indischen Kulturbereich," *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Goettingen, Philologisch-historische Klasse* 1969, Nr. 2, pp. 35–58.

3 *Sāsana* "instruction," "order" as used in the canonical texts refers to the dogmatical teachings of the Buddha as well as to the disciplinary orders given by the Buddha. In later Pāli works and as a loan-word in Sinhalese, Burmese and Thai, *sāsana* means the totality of the Buddhist institutions in a lawful unbroken succession from the time of the Buddha onwards. Therefore, the term "*establishment of the sāsana*" denotes the establishment of a valid tradition of monastic ordination or *upasampadā*.

4 The canonical text of the *Vinayapiṭaka* was edited by H. Oldenberg (5 vols., London 1879–83) and translated by I. B. Horner (*The Book of the Discipline*, 6 vols., London 1938–66). Two monographs deal with the regulations of the Vinaya: Sukumar Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monachism* (London, 1924); Durga N. Bhagvat, *Early Buddhist Jurisprudence* (Poona, 1939). Unfortunately, both these monographs are full of errors, and their authors have not understood the juridical system of Vinaya. Consequently, a systematical study of the Vinaya as a source of law is still lacking. The basic rules for the performance of *vinayakarmas* or juridical acts prescribed by Buddhist canonical law are discussed in H. Bechert, "Aśokas "Schismenedikt" und der Begriff Sanghabheda," *Wiener Zeitschrift fuer die Kunde Sued- und Ostasiens* 5 (1961) p. 21ff. For further information, see also V. Rosen, *Der Vinayavibhanga zum Bhikṣuprātimoksa der Sarvāstivādins* (Berlin, 1959); H. Härtel, *Karmavācanā* (Berlin, 1956); Gokuldas De, *Democracy in Early Buddhist Saṃgha* (Calcutta, 1955).

5 The *pārājika* offences are: sexual intercourse, theft, killing a human being, and pretension of spiritual perfections.

6 *Dīghanikāya*, ed. by T. W. Rhys Davids and J. E. Carpenter, vol. 2 (London, 1903) p. 162f.; *Vinaya*, ed. by H. Oldenberg, vol. 2, p. 284f.

7 On the early Buddhist councils see E. Frauwallner, "Die buddhistischen Konzile," *Zeitschrift der. Deutschen Morgenlaendischen Gesellschaft* 102 (1952), pp. 240–61; A. Bareau, *Les-premiers conciles bouddhiques* (Paris, 1955), and the relevant sections in É. Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien* (Louvain, 1958).

8 This council is not identical with the council of Pāṭaliputra recorded in Buddhist Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese sources; see Frauwallner, *op. cit.*, pp. 243–49 and 256–59. It has been called, therefore, the "Second Council of Pāṭaliputra" by modern scholars. In Ceylonese, Indian, and Southeast Asian Buddhological literature it is, however, still referred to as "Third Buddhist Council."

9 Aśoka's avoidance of unnecessary interference was stressed by L. Alsdorf, "Aśokas Schismen-Edikt und das dritte Konzil," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 3 (1959) p. 170f. and 174. Alsdorf has shown that P. L. Eggermont, *The Chronology of the Reign of Asoka Moriya* (Leiden, 1956) p. 118f., was wrong in denying the historicity of the council held during Aśoka's reign.

10 For a detailed discussion of the relevant sources see H. Bechert, "Aśokas "Schismenedikt" und der Begriff Sanghabheda," *Wiener Zeitschrift fuer die Kunde Sued- und Ostasiens* 5 (1961) pp. 18–52.

11 See my article quoted above, footnote 10. On the nonconfessional character of Aśoka's dharma, see the remark by Alsdorf, *op. cit.* (note 9) p. 173f.

12 *Mahāvaṃsa* 44, vs. 75–79.

13 Recently, doubts have been expressed about the historical background of the records on the reestablishment of the upasampadā from Burma; see C. E. Godakumbura, "Burmese Buddhist Order and Ceylon in the Eleventh Century," *Wickramarachchi Felicitation Volume* (Gampaha, 1968), pp. 291–95. It is possible that the upasampadī tradition brought back from Burma to Ceylon had been a paramparā originating from Ceylon and brought over to Burma earlier at an unknown date, but this would not affect the basic facts discussed here namely that it was the first reintroduction of the upasampadā from another country to Ceylon and that the triple organizational structure of the Sangha was retained.

14 On sects in Ceylon and their history, see W. Geiger, *Culture of Ceylon in Medieval Times* (Wiesbaden, 1960) pp. 207–11; H. Bechert, "Zur Geschichte der buddhistischen Sekten in Indien und Ceylon," *La Nouvelle Clio* 7–9 (1955–57) pp. 311–60. The existence of Mahāsanghika monks in medieval Ceylon has been asserted by R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, "Buddhist Nikāyas in Medieval Ceylon," *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies* 9 (1966) pp. 55–66. Until additional material comes to light, a final judgement on Gunawardana's interesting theory and reinterpretation of the puzzling so-called Jetavanārāma Sanskrit Inscription will be difficult.

15 The *katikāvatas* of Ceylon were edited and translated by Nandasena Ratnapala: *The Katikāvatas, Laws of the Buddhist Order of Ceylon from the 12th century to the 18th century* (doctoral dissertation, Goettingen, forthcoming as: *Muenchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft*, Beiheft N). The katikāvata issued by Parākramabāhu I was edited by D. M. de Z. Wickremasinghe, *Epigraphia Zeylanica* 2, pp. 256–83. The Sinhalese texts of all major katikāvatas were printed in *Katikāvatsangarā*, ed. D. B. Jayatilaka (Colombo, 1922).

16 *Dambadeṇi Katikāvata*, in: *Katikāvatsangarā, op. cit.*, pp. 6–22; Ratnapala, *op. cit.* See also *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon*, ed. H. C. Ray, vol. 1, part 2 (Colombo, 1960) p. 745ff.

17 *Kauṭalīya-Arthaśiāstra* 5. 2. 37–39; 13. 2. 21–35, etc.

18 Cf. Geiger, *op. cit.* (note 14) pp. 74, 119; Geiger, "Kenntnis der indischen Nītiliteratur in Ceylon," *Beitraege zur Literaturvissenschalt und Geistesgeschichte Indiens, Festgabe Hermann Jacobi* (Bonn, 1926) pp. 418–21. Kauṭalya's work seems to be mentioned in the book list of the famous Pagan inscription of 1442 under the misspelt title of "*Koladhvaja-ṭīkā*." See Mabel Haynes Bode, *The Pali Literature of Burma* (London, 1906) p. 108, no. 259.

19 There is a number of sources on this so-called "Moladanda Rebellion" which is not mentioned in the *Mahāvaṃsa*. See, *inter alia*, "The Johnstone Manuscripts, Relation of a Conspiracy Against the King of Candy in the Year 1760, given by the Appoohamy de Lanerolles," *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register* 2 (1916/17), pp. 272–74; P. E. E. Fernando, "India Office Land Grant of King Kirti Śrī Rājasiṃha,". *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies* 3 (1960), pp. 72–81. The rebellion is recorded in the *Śāsanāvatīrṇavarṇanāva*, edited by C. E. Godakumbura (Moratuva, 1956), a Sinhalese history of Buddhism.

20 On the relation of "sāsana reform" and "secularist tendencies" in the traditional history of the Sangha see H. Bechett, "Einige Fragen," *op. cit.* (see footnote 1), p. 275ff.

21 The upasampadā was reintroduced by inviting monks from Arakan during the rule of Vimaladharmasūrya I (1592–1604) and of Vimaladharmasūrya II (1687–1707); see *Mahāvaṃsa* 94, 15ff.; 97, 8ff.; P. E. E. Fernando, "The Rakkhanga-Sannas-Cūrṇikāva and the Date of the Arrival of Arakanese Monks in Ceylon," *University of Ceylon Review* 17 (1959) pp. 41–46.

22 The most detailed study of this reform movement is Koṭagama Vācissara, *Saraṇankara Sangharāja samaya* (Colombo, 1960). From the large number of articles on the topic, P. E. E. Fernando, "An Account of the Kandyan Mission sent to Siam in 1750 A.D.", *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies* 2 (1959) pp. 37–83, should be referred to. For the katikāvata issued by Kīrtiśrī-Rājasiṃha, see *Katikāvatsangarā, op. cit.* and Ratnapala, *op. cit.* (footnote 15).

23 W. Rahulā, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon, The Anuradhapura Period* (Colombo, 1956), p. 135, note 1, states that "the law of succession and incumbency of Buddhist temporalities in the early period is not clearly known." Rahula traces the first evidence for the "pupillary succession" from the Buddhannehāla Pillar Inscription dated in the third year of king Kassapa V (913–923) and edited by D. M. de Z. Wickremasinghe,

Epigraphia Zeylanica 1, pp. 191–200. The development is also discussed by W. M. A. Warnasuriya, "Inscriptional Evidence bearing on the Nature of Religious Endowment in Ancient Ceylon," *University of Ceylon Review* 1, no. 1. (Apr. 1943) pp. 69–74, no. 2 (Nov. 1943) pp. 74–82, and 2 (1944) pp. 92–96. However, we must concede that our knowledge of the stages of this transformation is still insufficient.

24 See H. Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschalt in den Laendern des Theravāda-Buddhismius*, vol. I (Frankfurt, 1966) p. 224, ff. and p. 230 ff.

25 For details of this rule see H. Bechert, *op. cit.*, (footnote 24), vol. 1, pp. 225–28.

26 *Dambadeṇi Katikāvata* par. 35 (in Ratnapala's edition, cf. footnote 15) prescribes that the heads of the *āyatanas* (a type of large monastic institutions) should belong to certain families. On the *jñātiśiṣyaparam parāva* see Bechert, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 226.

27 See also H. D. Evers, " 'Monastic Landlordism' in Ceylon," *Journal of Asian Studies* 28 (1969) pp. 685–92.

28 See H. Bechert, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 230–44; K. M. De Silva, "Buddhism and the British Government in Ceylon 1840–1855," *Ceylon Historical Journal* 10 (1960–61) pp. 91–159; H. D. Evers, "Buddhism and British Colonial Policy in Ceylon, 1815–1875," *Asian Studies* 2 (1964) pp. 323–333.

29 *Daṃbadeṇi katikāvata* par. 13 (in Ratnapala's edition, cf. footnote 15). Most of the lower castes of the Sinhalese originated from the assimilation of minority ethnic groups; in the coastal areas, the larger minority castes can be traced back to immigrated Dravidian populations which have been assimilated by the Sinhalese in the course of many centuries. Therefore, historically speaking, the Goyigama caste can be largely identified with the Sinhalese peasant population in the proper sense of the word.

30 H. Bechert, *op. cit.* (footnote 24), vol. 1, pp. 211–20; A. L. Green, "Sinhalese-Religious Organization in the Low Country," Paper, *Conference on Ceylon, University of Pennsyluania*, 1967. For details on the nikāyas in Ceylon see *Buddha śāsana komiṣan vārtāva*, Colombo, 1959 (Government of Ceylon, Sessional Paper XVIII-1959) part 1, pp. 27–49; *Siṃhala viśvakoṣaya*, vol. 1 (Colombo, 1963) pp. 639–43 (s.v. Amarapura-Nikāya); *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* ed. by G. P. Malalasekera (Colombo, 1961 ff.) vol. 1, pp. 406–09.

31 Information on the organizational and administrative structure of the Sangha in precolonial Burma see D. E. Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma* (Princeton, N. J., 1965), pp. 3–37 and H. Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Laendern des Theravāda-Buddhismus*, vol. 2 (Wiesbaden, 1967) p. 16 f. (with further references in note 1373 a); on its development in the colonial period, Bechert, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 17 ff., 40 ff., and D. E. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 43 ff.

32 The available information on the Burmese nikāyas is scarce and partly contradictory; I refer to my survey of their history, *op. cit.* (footnote 31), vol. 2, pp. 21–24.

33 Cf. also E. M. Mendelson, "Buddhism and the Burmese Establishment," *Archives de Sociologie des Religions* 17 (1964) pp. 85–95.

34 H. Bechert, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 23.

35 Cf. H. Bechert, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 185.

36 Field research on Buddhism in Bengal has been supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemein-schaft. A monograph on the history of Bengali Buddhism is under preparation. See also H. Bechert, "Contemporary Buddhism in Bengal and Tripura," *Educational Miscellany* (Agartala) 4, no. 3/4 (Dec. 1967–Mar. 1968) pp. 1–25.

37 *Dīghanikāya*, ed. by T. W. Rhys Davids and J. E. Carpenter, vol. 2 (London, 1903) p. 154.

38 *Cullavagga* XI.1. 9 (*Vinayapiṭaka*, ed. by H. Oldenberg, vol. 2, p. 287 f.).

39 On the basis of canonical law, it was consistent and justified when the Rangoon High Court ruled in 1935 that a decision of the hierarchy was not valid since "neither the

Thathạnabaing (Sangharāja of Burma) nor the hierarchy set up by him are mentioned in the Vinaya"; see H. Bechert, *op. cit.* (footnote 31), vol. 2, p. 44.

40 The best description of *paritta* is found in E. Waldschmidt, *Von Ceylon bis Turfan*, (Goettingen, 1967) pp. 456–78.

41 On the place of this idea in the history of Buddhist thought see H. Bechert, "Zur Fruehgeschichte des Mahāyāna-Buddhismus," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlaendischen Gesellschaft* 113 (1964) pp. 530–35.

42 Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsaetsse zur Religionssoziologie*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Tuebingen, 1923) p. 220.

43 I cannot agree with the definition of "Great Tradition" and "Little Tradition" in Theravāda countries proposed by Gananath Obeyesckere ("The Great Tradition and the Little in the Perspective of Sinhalese Buddhism," *Journal of Asian Studies* 22, pp. 139–53); see H. Bechert, "Einige Fragen der Religionssoziologie" *op. cit.* (see footnote 1) pp. 266–75.

44 H. J. Benda, "The Structure of Southeast Asian History," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 3 (1962) pp. 114–18.

45 See Michael M. Ames, "Magical-animism and Buddhism: A Structural Analysis of the Sinhalese Religious System," *Religion in South Asia*, ed. by Eduard B. Harper (Seattle, 1964) pp. 21–52; cf. also my article quoted in footnote 1. On the integration of both religious systems see the example described by H. D. Evers, "Buddha and the Seven Gods: The Dual Organization of a Temple in Central Ceylon," *Journal of Asian Studies* 27 (1968) pp. 541–50. The cults of Ceylon and of Burma have been compared in Bechert, *op. cit.* (footnote 1), pp. 287–93.

46 On the movement of resurgent Buddhism in Ceylon and Burma see D. E. Smith (ed.), *South Asian Politics and Religion* (Princeton, 1966), with four chapters on Ceylon by D. E. Smith, A. J. Wilson and C. D. S. Siriwardane; D. E. Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma* (Princeton, 1965) and H. Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Laendern des Theravāda-Buddhismus*, vols. 1–2 (Frankfurt, 1966, Wiesbaden, 1967).

47 D. C. Vijayavardhana, *Dhạrma-Vijaya, Triumph of Righteousness or the Revolt in the Temple* (Colombo, 1953) pp. 11–20.

48 Valpala Rahula, *Bhiksuvagē urumaya*, 1st ed. (Colombo, 1946).

49 This text was published in Vijayardhana, *op. cit.*, p. 156 f.

50 H. Bechert, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 230–44.

51 H. Bechert, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 294–300; vol. 2, pp. 73–86; D. E. Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*, pp. 230–80.

52 Recently editions of collected writings of the Anagārika Dharmapāla have been published in Sinhalese and English: *Dharmapāla lipi*, ed. by Ānanda W. P. Gurugē (Colombo, 1965); *Return to Righteousness, A Collection of Speeches, Essays and Letters of the Anagarika Dharmapala*, ed. by Ananda Guruge (Colombo, 1965). Unfortunately, the editor has made arbitrary changes in the text as pointed out by W. Halbfass, "Anagārika Dharmapāla," in: *Das Christentum im Urteil seiner Gegner*, ed. by K. Deschner, forthcoming.

53 *Bauddha toraturu parīksaka sabhāvē vārtāva* (Balangoda, 1956); abridged English version: *The Betrayal of Buddhism, An Abridged Version of the Report of the Buddhist Committee of Inquiry* (Balangoda, 1956). See H. Bechert, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 267–79.

54 Tennakon Vimalananda, *Buddhism in Ceylon under the Christian Powers* (Colombo, 1963).

55 A similar evaluation is given by Evers, *op. cit.* (footnote 27), p. 692.

56 G. C. Mendis, *Ceylon Today and Yesterday, Main Currents of Ceylon History*, 2nd ed. (Colombo, 1963) pp. 180–87.

57 For a detailed discussion of the problem involved see H. Bechert, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 67–81.
58 See H. Bechert, "Ueber den Ursprung der Geschichtsschreibung," *op. cit.*, (see footnote 2).
59 For the political theory of modern Burmese Buddhism, see E. Sarkisyanz, *Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution* (The Hague, 1965).
60 On the history of Buddhist monks' associations see H. Bechert, *op. cit.* (footnote 46), vol. 1, pp. 300–05; vol. 2, pp. 86–95; Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*, pp. 55, 106, 188 ff.

19

NOTES ON THE FORMATION OF BUDDHIST SECTS AND THE ORIGINS OF MAHĀYĀNA[1]

Heinz Bechert

Source: Cultural Department of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany (ed.) (1973) *German Scholars on India*. New Delhi and Varanasi: Chowkhamba, pp. 6–18.

Though the extent of surviving literature from the earlier period of Indian Buddhism is tremendous, our understanding of many important events and developments in the history of the Buddha's religion in India has remained controversial. This is mainly due to the fact that India did not develop a tradition of historiography prior to the first Muslim invasions in the subcontinent. It is all the more surprising that there was practically no Buddhist historical writing in mainland India, since it was essential for the validity of a monk's ordination (upasampadā) to establish the fact that it is based on an uninterrupted succession commencing from an ordination granted by the Buddha himself. The lists of the so-called "Patriarchs" of later Buddhist sects were drawn up for this very purpose. But a survey of the texts which allege to contain the church history of Indian Buddhism shows that they do not have even the very basic qualities of historical writing and that they contradict each other to such a degree that it is impossible to find out the historical facts from the reports on many important developments.

An attempt to convert the loosely connected traditions into a real history of Buddhism was made only when Buddhism had spread outside the subcontinent. Thus, the chronicles of Ceylon (Dīpavaṃsa und Mahāvaṃsa) can be considered as the most ancient pieces of existing historical writing composed in the environment of Indian culture. It is, however, noteworthy that the earliest Ceylonese chronicles were pieces of national historiography of a small country striving to preserve a distinct political and cultural identity vis-a-vis the strong power of South Indian empires. Though the existing chronicles of Ceylon–written in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D., but based on an earlier tradition of historical writing commencing in the 2nd century B.C.–were written by monks, large portions of these books are dominated by the mentality of the political historiography of Ceylon. To a certain extent, the introduction of Buddhaghosa's

Samantapāsādikā (5th century) can be considered as containing a church history. The first Ceylonese work which shows all qualifications which we would expect from a real ecclesiastical history, was written as late as in the 14th century. It is the Nikāyasangrahaya, composed by the Mahāthera Dharmakīrti II, the then Sangharāja or head of the Sangha in the Island. Its author has also included earlier material transmitted outside the chroniclers' traditions. Indian Buddhist works give information on the origination of Buddhist sects, but again, the material was arranged in the form of full-fledged historical works only outside India. The Tibetan histories of Buddhism by Bu-ston, Tāranātha etc., therefore occupy an important place in Buddhist literature.

In the absence of reliable Indian historical traditions, the early history of Buddhism was worked out mainly with the help of indirect evidence. The main divisions of the relevant material are: 1 inscriptional evidence, 2. casual references in doctrinal texts, 3. comparison of the contents of existing versions of the canonical texts of Buddhism, and 4. the reports of Chinese pilgrims. To these, two other important sources of information must be added, which have been largely neglected, viz. the comparison of the terminology used in Vinaya or ecclesiastical law of different schools or sects, and the linguistic peculiarities of texts surviving in Indian languages. With the help of these sources, quite a number of historical details can be traced, if we make use of generally accepted criteria of probability. Let me mention only a few examples. We can establish the probability of an historical kernel in the traditions concerning the First Buddhist Council at Rājagṛha on the ground of an episode found in the more conservative redaction of the tradition, viz. the episode of Purāṇa. This elder monk is said to have refused to take part in and to accept the proceedings of the council. He declared that he would only accept what he himself had learned from the Buddha. There is no mentioning of any disciplinary action against Purāṇa, the standpoint of whom is tacitly accepted as a legal one. It is not possible to imagine that such an episode should have been invented by monks who claimed the universal validity of that council. (The argument proposed by André Bareau in his study "Les premiers conciles bouddhiques", Paris 1955, p. 24, that this episode must be of younger origin because it is contained only in the traditions of the Theravādin, Mahīśāsaka, Dharmaguptaka and Haimavatas and not in the Mahāsānghika texts is based on a purely formalistic method without consideration of the contents of the texts). This does not imply, of course, that we should accept the claim of the tradition that the canon was collected and recited by the first council. It is, however, possible that the earliest parts of the later Vinayapiṭaka, i.e. the basic formulas of the Prātimokṣa or confession liturgy had been agreed upon at such an early meeting.

Another instance of an unchanged and uncensored record is that of the fruitless attempt of the Buddha to convert the first man he met after his enlightenment. When the Buddha had delivered his long formula, this man said "hupeyya", "may be", shook his head, turned from the road, and went off (Vinaya I, p. 8). Besides general considerations of probability, the linguistic

peculiarity of this word attests the high age of the account. The optative form "hupeyya" is not found in any other Pāli text and it must be considered a slang word of the Benares dialect at the time of the Buddha.

A study of Vinaya terminology in Pāli and Buddhist Sanskrit sources yields surprising results. We should expect that the linguistic affinities of Vinaya terminology correspond to the main lines of the doctrinal affinities known from the historical traditions on the origin and spread of early Buddhist sects. But this is not the case. Since Mahāsānghika-Lokottaravāda Vinaya texts have come to light in Buddhist Sanskrit language recently, we know that the Vinaya terminology of this school shows similarities to that of its most extreme adversary in the later doctrinal discussions, viz. that of the Pāli school. (See Gustav Roth, Terminologisches aus dem Vinaya der Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin, Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlaendischen Gesellschaft 118, 1968, p. 334–348).

Since the Vinaya terminology generally remained unchanged once it was accepted, this observation allows us to trace a stratum in the diversification of early Buddhism which is prior to the formation of the sects that are known to us. It seems that this stratum represents the formation of local monastic communities or Sanghas that had their own traditions, but had not yet developed into sects. Another vestige of this stage is apparent in the old classifications of the sacred texts according to nine angas ("members"), which later on was given up in favour of the "three baskets" or tripiṭaka classification, though traces of it survived in the sub-headings of the fifth part of the second piṭaka or "basket", the Khuddaka-Nikāya or Kṣudrakāgama.

In the second stratum we observe the formation of schools or sects based on the acceptance of certain developments and/or interpretations of monastic discipline. It is important to note that the separation of these sects took place in a way in which a formal violation of the "sanghabheda" rule could be avoided. The new term "nikāya" ("group") was used for these sects. The sanghabheda rule must have been formulated in an earlier period. Though Dr. Biswadeb Mukherjee's study of the Devadatta traditions (Die Überlieferung von Devadatta, dem Widersacher des Buddha, in den kanonischen Schriften, München 1966) has made it clear that the existing versions of this account do not belong to the earliest strata of Buddhist literature, it cannot be doubted that an injunction against the splitting of the Sangha should have belonged to the earliest set of monastic rules. In the old explanatory passage which came to be included in the canonical Vinayapiṭaka in Pāli, disagreements on vinaya questions are mentioned as motivations for sanghabheda, whereas there is no reference to dogmatical controversies. This shows that these passages were formulated before the period of the formation of dogmatic schools.

The transformation of local Sangha communities into distinct schools or vinaya sects, which were called nikāya, must have taken place in a period of intensifying traffic, i.e. in the period that immediately preceded the Maurya period and in the Maurya period itself. The first epigraphical evidence of these developments is found in King Aśoka's edict against Sanghabheda. The King,

who had become a patron of Buddhism, was very much concerned about the decaying moral conduct in the great monasteries, and he purged the Order from those monks who had caused sanghabheda. He did this by supporting, with the power of the state, the application of the old rules and procedures of Buddhists ecclesiastical law against the violators of the prescriptions of vinaya. Though the relevant action had to be taken by the monks themselves as a vinayakarma, i.e. a formal act of a complete assembly of the monks of a particular place, Aśoka's activity represented, for all practical purposes, a massive interference of state power into internal matters of the Buddhist monastic community, and, at the same time, the establishment of a patronage of the state over the Sangha. Aśoka's action has become the model and the prototype of state–Sangha relations in Ceylonese and Southeast Asian Theravāda Buddhism.

Historically, however, a connection of Aśoka with a particular nikāya or sect as claimed by later Theravāda tradition and by several modern scholars cannot be established. It can be clearly shown by a careful analysis of historical records and inscriptions that the king was not partial towards any section of the Sangha. (See H. Bechert, Aśokas "Schismenedikt" und der Begriff Sanghabheda, Wiener Zeitschrift fuer die Kunde Sued-und Ostasiens 5, 1961, p. 18–52). Furthermore, the records of the Buddhist missions under the patronage of Aśoka can be connected with the development of a group of Buddhist sects which is termed "Vinaya sects" by Erich Frauwallner. The Vinayapiṭakas of four of these schools have been handed down, viz. that of the Sarvāstivādin, Dharmaguptakas, Mahīśāsakas and the Pāli school. As a matter of fact, these four versions of the Vinayapiṭaka are clearly derived from one original tradition. (See E. Frauwallner, The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature, Roma 1956).

It is, however, important to note that not long after another type of nikāyas came into existence, viz. the doctrinal or dogmatic schools. These came into existence as a rule inside the schools which had been formed on the basis of local communities and/or on the basis of vinaya controversies. Remarkably, existing differences did not prevent the taking over and adaptation of patterns of literary composition and arrangement as well as that of texts or portions of texts. Thus, e.g., the pattern of the arrangement of Vinaya material which seems to have been developed within the tradition of the Vinaya schools–which for practical purposes can be identified with the Sthaviravāda tradition–has been adopted by all schools. The non-Sthaviravādins did, of course, insert their own textual traditions into the model they took over. Similarly, the arrangement of Sūtra material into five nikāyas or āgamas has been adopted by all sects at a time when there was already a very substantial difference in the textual material transmitted by the schools. It is unnecessary to postulate an "Urkanon" or original canon as Heinrich Lueders has done. The linguistic peculiarities collected by Lueders from Pāli and Buddhist Sanskrit texts do belong not to one stratum but to different strata, and those which can be identified as belonging to the earliest stratum go back to the earliest oral tradition existing prior to any form of arrangement of the texts or canon. The problem has to be reexamined on the

basis of broader collections than those presented in Lueders' book "Beobachtungen zur Sprache des buddhistischen Urkanons" (Berlin 1954) which has, however, given an impetus for further studies in the field.

On the other hand, we can reconstruct the earliest form of particular traditions on the basis of a comparative study of the contents of existing texts as Ernst Waldschmidt has done with the relations of the most important periods of the life of the Buddha, but this very study has proven that the existing patterns of arrangement even of the most ancient material are of secondary origin–with the important exception of the Prātimokṣa or confession liturgy which has been mentioned before as a text which was formulated and arranged at a very early period.

These peculiarities of early Buddhist literary tradition and the considerable degree of liberty in the exchange of textual material was rendered possible by the fact that the texts were transmitted exclusively by oral tradition during that early period. We do not know exactly when the writing down of the sacred texts took place in India, but we know from the Ceylonese chronicles that in Ceylon it took place under King Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya, 2nd century B.C. Some scholars have expressed doubts about the reliability of this account, but again it is the study of linguistic details which helps to establish beyond doubt that the texts had had a period of oral tradition in Ceylon before they were written on palm-leaves. This is clear from the existence of undoubtably old Sinhalese-Prakrit forms in Pāli suttas. These forms were used to characterize the speech of heretical teachers as uneducated speech. (See H. Bechert, Singhalesisches im Pālikanon, Wiener Zeitschrift fuer die Kunde Sued-und Ostasiens 1, 1957, p. 71–75). If my conclusion from a comparative study of early avadāna texts are correct, the writing down of the texts took place in India at about the same time. Since the texts had been written down, the limits between the nikāyas had become less flexible, and it seems that about that time most of the sects enumerated in the classical lists had already come into existence. We do have, of course, positive evidence of large scale exchange of material between different nikāyas even after that period. Thus, I could trace extracts from Mūlasarvāstivāda works taken over not only in classical Pāli commentaries and in the Nettipakaraṇa, but also in the Pāli canon itself. (Cf. H. Bechert, Bruchstuecke buddhistischer Verssammlungen, Berlin 1961).

However, basically one particular redaction of the canonical writing was accepted in each particular nikāya. In the case of the Ceylonese nikāyas, we now know that at least the two earliest and most influential subsects–Mahāvihāravāsin and Abhayagirivāsin–did make use of the same canon in Pāli with very minor differences. This becomes evident from references in comparatively early sources as well as from a study of the surviving texts of the Abhayagiri school (e.g., the Saddhammopāyana by Abhayagiricakravartin).

Approximately in that very period when the canonical texts were written down, another important innovation was started, which was to divide the Buddhist world ever since, viz. the formation of Mahāyāna, the "great vehicle." That Mahāyāna itself is not to be conceived as a "sect" is settled by unambiguous

textual evidence. The formation of Mahāyāna is contrasted with Śrāvakayāna, the vehicle of the hearers, or Hīnayāna, the small vehicle i.e. with the old doctrine. The so-called "sects", i.e. the nikāyas or vādas, on the other hand had come into being inside the development of Hīnayāna or Śrāvakayāna.

Whereas the nikāyas were defined as groups of monks that mutually acknowledged the validity of their upasampadā or higher ordination and made use of particular recensions of the sacred texts, the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism was a development which pervaded the whole sphere of Buddhism and all nikāyas. Mahāyāna is the confession of all those who approve a particular request to all Buddhists. This is the request to go the path leading to the status of a Buddha–the long and troublesome path of a Bodhisatva, a "Buddha–to–be",–while the Śrāvakayāna, the old doctrine, had only urged upon endeavour for redemption of one's own. For those advocating this new religious program, the old controversies of the nikāyas lost much of their importance, so that Mahāyāna doctrines of similar character could spread in quite different congregations. Early Mahāyāna texts, e.g. Prajñāpāramitās, Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra, Gaṇḍavyūha etc., were accepted by monks of many nikāyas.

Since the Mahāyānic texts claim to represent that part of the teachings of the historical Buddha, which had been hidden to the public for a certain period, the authors of most of these texts were very careful to avoid references which could help us to trace the place and the time of their origin. Here, again, the study of linguistic peculiarities can serve a useful purpose. It has been concluded from the language of the Nepalese recension of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka that this recension of the work originated in the north-western parts of the sub-continent. (Cf. Hiaen–lin Dschi, Die Umwandlung der Endung–aṃ in–o und–u im Mittelindischen, Nachrichten von der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Phil.—hist. Kl. 1944, No. 6).

We learn from the accounts of Chinese pilgrims, and from the Indian Buddhist sources themselves, that there had been Mahāyānic groups in various nikāyas. Thus, a late text like the Kriyāsangrahapañjikā still emphasizes that the adherents of Mahāyāna must undergo the ordination or upasampadā as prescribed by their nikāya before being introduced as Mahāyāna monks by another formal act. Thus, the outside forms of the old nikāyas were preserved, though they did not retain their original importance. It remained a general criterion of membership in the Buddhist Congregation that a monk had undergone an upasampādā leading back in a continuous tradition to the Buddha himself that is validly accomplished in accordance with the rules of Vinaya. Therefore the formalities prescribed in the Vinaya had to remain untouched, and a particularly Mahāyānic Vinaya literature has been written only very late, not in order to replace the old Vinaya but existing only in addition to it. In this respect, a change took place only in times of decay. But even the Vajrācāryas of modern Nepalese Buddhism–although they have ceased to be monks–have retained the first of the old monastic ceremonies, viz. that of pravrajyākarma, as a prerequisite for the tantric abhiṣeka ceremonies of their ācāryas. I have been able to

collect the relevant texts, which are not printed and generally not shown even to outsiders as part of the ritual tradition, during a recent visit to Nepal. In countries with an unbroken monastic Mahāyāna tradition, a particular Vinaya is still the basis of monastic life, e.g. the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya for Tibetan Buddhism and the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya for Chinese and Vietnamese monks.

Taking into consideration these facts, we should be sceptical facing any attempt to locate the growth of Mahāyāna in one particular nikāya. Some scholars have tried to locate it in the Mahāsānghika tradition, other have maintained that the doctrines of Mahāyāna had come into being or had been developed within the Sarvāstivāda school. By the adherents of the latter opinion, as an argument it is mentioned that in some important Mahāyāna texts passages from the old canon are quoted in the recension of the Sarvāstivāda school. To this argument we have to object that in North India the Sarvāstivāda school was one of the most widespread of the old schools and, therefore, their Tripiṭaka was widely used. Because the adherents of Mahāyāna stuck to the old forms of monastic life, they also stuck to their membership in the nikāya to which their upasampadā tradition belonged, and it was quite natural for them to quote the old texts in accordance to this membership. This had been the case in later times, still. In the "History of Buddhism", Bu–ston (transl. by Obermiller, p. 197) mentions that for a certain period Tibetan Buddhists only translated texts of the Mūlasārvāstivāda–nikāya from among the Hīnayāna texts available to them. Similarly, the opinion that particularly the Mahāsānghika school formed the only cradle of Mahāyāna cannot pass a thorough examination, though certain dogmatical opinions attributed to them foreshadow basic Mahāyāna beliefs. (See Etienne Lamotte, Sur la formation du Mahāyāna, Asiatica, Festschrift Friedrich Weller, Leipzig 1954, p. 377–396).

According to these conditions, we understand how monks of both vehicles could live together peacefully in the same monastic congregations and could join the same vinayakarmas, i.e. formal acts of ecclesiastical law, if they belonged to the upasampadā tradition of the same nikāya, whereas monks–whether Hīnayāna or Mahāyāna–did not perform together vinayakarmas, if they did belong to different nikāyas. In this connection, the controversy on the explanation of the term "Mahāyāna–sthavira" in Yuan Chwang's records can easily be settled. The Mahāyāna–Sthaviravādin are those sections of the Sthaviravāda community who had accepted Mahāyāna doctrines although they still belonged to Sthaviravāda school as far as bhikṣu ordination and vinayakarma was concerned. I found an interesting piece of evidence for the existence of Mahāyāna–Sthaviravādin or Mahāyāna–Theravādin texts in Ceylon, viz. a long completely Mahāyānic passage in a late section of the Pāli canon. This passage forms the Buddhāpadāna, the first part of the Apadāna book. These Mahāyāna–Sthaviras of Ceylon did use the Pāli canon as their particular version of the Hīnayāna canonical texts in the same way as many North Indian Mahāyānic communities used the Sarvāstivāda canon. It is interesting to note that this early Ceylonese Mahāyāna text was composed in Pāli and not translated from Sanskrit, while

later Ceylonese Mahāyāna tradition preferably used Sanskrit as its sacred language. When orthodoxy was successful in Ceylon in finally suppressing the Mahāyānist faction in the Sangha–called Vetullavāda or Vaitulyavāda in the Island–the Mahāyānists thus had already been successful to obtain recognition of one of their texts as part of the generally accepted Tripiṭaka, and this text therefore survived the destruction of the literature of the Ceylon Vaitulyavādin.

These indistinct limits between the two vehicles can only be understood if in the early stage of the development of Mahāyāna the differences between the doctrines of the two vehicles were not very deep, and if the new doctrine had developed from the concepts of the old one without a sharp rupture.

There is, as you know, a large number of studies on the doctrines of early Mahāyāna Buddhism and its connection with early Buddhist thought. The idea of ūnyatā or "emptity" has been traced back to canonical sūtras, e.g. to the Mahāvedallasutta of the Majjhimanikāya. In a similar way, the concept of the three kāyas or "bodies" of a Buddha in Mahāyāna doctrine seems to be based on the concept of two kāyas, rūpakāya and dharmakāya, in early Buddhist sūtras. Although there is a connection between early Buddhism and Mahāyāna in the development of these and many other concepts, the most important peculiarity of Mahāyāha is the already mentioned Bodhisatva ideal which also can be regarded as the most dynamic force for the development of early Mahāyāna. Moreover, the example of the theoretical foundations of the Bodhisatva ideal is such as to show us the connections of Mahāyāna with old Buddhism. The distinction of three kinds of beings not to be reborn belongs to the pre-Mahāyāna period. Besides the Samyaksambuddhas, i.e. the Buddhas who have attained supreme enlightenment by their own means without the help of others and who announce the doctrine for the benefit of others, there are the Pratyekabuddhas, who have attained enlightenment by their own means, but are unable to expose the doctrine to others, and finally the Arhats who are pupils of a Buddha and who attain salvation after they had come to know the doctrine as exposed by a Buddha. There have never been controversies about this threefold division, though questions of the particular nature and the essential features of the Buddhas and the Arhats have been disputed among the nikāyas. As an example for these controversial questions I quote the question if a Buddha be a man in the proper sense of the word, or if he only produce a delusive body in order to announce the doctrine by means of his life and words. Another such dispute was if an Arhat, under certain circumstances, could fall back into Saṃsāra, i.e. if he could loose his saintly character.

The more important question for our problem, however, is the question, for which deeper reasons one being becomes a Buddha, another one an Arhat. The tradition that Gautama, in one of his former existences as Sumedha, had delivered a vow (praṇidhi) before the Buddha Dīpankara to become a Buddha himself, was accepted as sufficient in the earlier period of Buddhism. By force of this vow, which was confirmed by the prophecy–vyākaraṇa–of the former Buddha, Sumedha became a Bodhisatva. The vow and the prophecy was subse-

quently to be renewed, whenever the Bodhisatva met other former Buddhas. It was only after innumerable reincarnations and after accomplishing innumerable good deeds, that the Bodhisatva was finally born as Siddhārtha Gautama, the son of the Śākya king Śuddhodana and that he attained to full enlightenment as a Buddha. Consequently, no result of mere chance is involved, if a being is enlightened as a Buddha. Similarly, it is the result of various conditions and of different stages of development in former existences, if other beings become Pratyekabuddhas or Arhats. Some texts tell us that Arhats had expressed the wish (praṇidhi) to become an Arhat in presence of a former Buddha but not the vow to become a Buddha.

As a consequence of the teaching of a Buddha numerous beings attain Nirvāṇa without having gone a Bodhisatva's long and troublesome path of accumulating merits. Thus they earn a conspicuous benefit from the fact that the Bodhisatva has gone this path. The understanding of this is reflected in Vasubandhu's statement in the Abhidharmakośa that the real existence of other beings has to be taken for granted, because otherwise there would be no possibility of teaching the doctrine. These views seem to be contradictory to the so-called Law of Karma, the doctrine that every being can only earn the fruits of his own deed; for it is the actions of the Bodhisatva in form of the announcement of the doctrine, which bring benefit to other beings. If these beings had not become aware of the doctrine, they had not yet a chance to attain to arhatship. Therefore, the Buddha's teaching and the foundation of his Śāsana or religion has its peculiar object only insofar as it shows the way of salvation to beings who are not mature for salvation by means of their own karma, i.e. who are unable to become Pratyekabuddhas. It is for this very purpose that a Bodhisatva has to accomplish more good deeds than are necessary for his own salvation. Only in this case the statement of the old texts has its sense, that the doctrine has been announced for the benefit of many people (bahujanahitāya).

The laws of connection between the deeds and their results or "fruits of deed", karmaphala, are to be harmonized herewith only on the basis of the assumption that parts of a Buddha's karmic results of his previous efforts as a Bodhisatva pass over to his audience by way of his teaching. His own lengthened way to Nirvāṇa shortens the way of his hearers. A transmission of religious merits takes place: This is explicitly stated only in Mahāyāna texts, but not in the literature of Śrāvakayāna or Hīnayāna. The decision to offer up one's own merits for the benefit of others is a fundamental part of the decision to become a Bodhisatva. It is termed generation of "bodhicitta". Two concepts were coined which are important in this context: puṇyānumodanā and bodhipariṇāmanā.

In the texts of old Buddhism, anumodanā is the "joyous acceptance" of a gift or of a sacrifice, in the terminology of Vinaya it is the joyous consent to important meritorious actions. Every gift to the monastic congregation is meritorious for both partners, for the receiving monks as well as for the donor. When a monk receives a donation, he procures the opportunity for a layman to earn high merit, and therefore he does a good deed himself.

The original meaning of anumodanā has been amplified in the Mahāyāna texts; puṇyānumodanā is the joyous consent to all good actions, by means of which the beings get rid of the tortures of the hell and go the right way to Nirvāṇa under the guidance of the Buddhas. This attitude removes the boundaries between one's own striving for Nirvāṇa and that of others. The necessary complement of anumodanā is pariṇānā, the sacrifice of one's own merits for the benefit of all beings for the purpose of progress on the path to Nirvāṇa. Therefore it is called bodhipariṇāmanā. This is the decision to make use of one's own merits not for quick salvation of one's own, but for the long way of a Bodhisatva.

The problem involved is not explicitly discussed in the early Buddhist literature, i.e. in Hīnayāna or Śrāvakayāna texts. But actually the concept of transferring merit to suffering ghosts, pretas, on the occasion of a dakṣinā (offering) is already found in early texts viz. in the Petavatthu of the Pāli canon or the Pretāvadāna of the Sarvāstivāda literature. Perhaps it is influenced by ideas of ancestral sacrifice. There can be no doubt, however, that the notion of transferring merit is found in these texts, though it has another name here.

The Theravādins, however, in connection with their attempt to delimitate their own doctrine against other views, arrived at the negation of the possibility to transfer merit. Consequently, the view that "one being could help the consciousness of another one" is repudiated in the Kathāvatthu (XVI. 2.), one of the seven books of the Pāli Abhidharmapiṭaka. As a justification, the Buddha's word that everybody has to get on with his Karma himself, is quoted. Exactly in the same manner the theory is repudiated that one being can procure happiness for another being which does not result from his karma (paro parassa sukhaṃ anuppadeti, Kathāvatthu XVI. 3.). This refutation is based on the argument, that it is also impossible for one being to inflict pain upon another one which does not result from his own karma. These views of the author of the Kathāvatthu can hardly be justified if we remember our previous considerations. Other Hīnayāna schools did not share the somewhat extreme standpoint of this text. These schools differ from the Mahāyāna not by denying the possibility of transferring merit, but in the will of their adherents to confine themselves to their own salvation, i.e. to make use of the beneficial effects of the Buddha's teaching without own efforts for the salvation of others. On the other hand, the adherents of Mahāyāna or Bodhisatvayāna do want to contribute to the sạlvation of others.

The repudiation of the opinion that a being could offer good karma to others found in the Kathāvatthu had no permanent results in the development of the doctrine of the Theravādins themselves. The attitude of defense against the growth of Mahāyānic influence which is a mark of the Kathāvatthu was mitigated in later days. Post-canonical texts of the Theravādins contain statements about transferring merit just as avadāna texts of other schools. E.g., we read in the Mahāvaṃsa (44. 109) that king Jeṭṭhatissa before committing suicide asked his wife to recite the holy texts and to transfer to him the merit of his performance. Similar examples are found in many post-canonical Pāli texts. The practice

of transferring merit belongs to the most important usages of modern Theravāda Buddhism, i.e. the so-called Southern Buddhism in Ceylon and Southeast Asia. It is designated by the expression puññānumodanā and pattidāna (prāptidāna). The word puññānumodanā covers both puṇyānumodanā and pariṇāmanā of the Mahāyāna texts.

Thus we read in an exposition of religious duties for pilgrims in the Sinhalese booklet Manoraṃjanī Bauddha–ädahilla under the title prāpti–dānaya or pin dīma (i.e. puṇyadāna, gift of merit): "After a pilgrimage it is the duty of every Buddhist, to accomplish a puṇyānumodanā (pin anumodan), for the deities protecting the world and the doctrine, for one's kinsmen, and for all beings existing in the world."

The fact that the possibility of transferring merit-a concept originating from the very beginnings of Mahāyāna Budhism—has been acknowledged by all Buddhists—by the adherents of the "Great Vehicle" as well as by the Theravādins—confirms clearly to what extent this theory has to be considered as a logical consequence of the doctrines of early Buddhism.

Thus we must not be astonished if we find traces of the Bodhisatva ideal in many texts of the Sarvāstivādins, e.g. the Avadānaśataka. These traces are not to be explained as outside influences i.e. influences from Mahāyāna doctrines. On the contrary, these ideas followed quite naturally from the dynamics of early Buddhist thought-and Mahāyāna was based on these.

In this connection, it is useful to note that the Bodhisatva ideal, in these cases, is connected mainly with those forms of the doctrine which can be called "lay Buddhism" in a wider sense. The vow to become a Bodhisatva is open for lay followers in the same way as for the monks. Here, the difference between laity and Sangha which had been so essential for early Buddhism, has become minimal. It is not a mere chance, therefore, that many of the great Sūtras of Mahāyāna, the Mahāvaipulyasūtras, are addressed not to monks, but to kulaputras, to the "people of good families".

There can be no doubt that a number of other developments also contributed to the rise of Mahāyāna, e.g. the bhakti movement. The most important innovation, however, was the generalization of the request to make the Bodhisatva's vow and consequently, the availability of a treasure of merit to the faithful. This was a positive departure from the original doctrine: Mahāyāna Buddhism had come into existence. For scholars working in the field of comparative religion it may be interesting to notice that the early Mahāyāna concept of a "treasure of merit" finds a very close parallel in the notion of the "treasure of the church" in Roman Catholic dogma since the 13th century.

Note

1 This paper is based on a public lecture held at Yale University, New Haven, on November 20th, 1969, when the author was a visiting professor at that university. Its purpose is to outline some of the problems of the religious history of early Buddhism and to summarize some of the author's results.

20

BUDDHIST *JHĀNA*

Its nature and attainment according to the Pali sources

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Jhāna clearly played a major part in the theory and practice of ancient Buddhism. The word itself occurs extremely often in the *suttas* both in frequently repeated phrases and in more detailed treatment. It becomes a fundamental category of *abhidhamma*.[1] Nor does its importance diminish later; most of the first half of the *Visuddhi-magga* of Buddhaghosa (c.430 A.D.) is concerned in one way or another with the practice of *jhāna*. Not surprisingly it has been the subject of scholarly investigation on a number of occasions.[2] Nevertheless the topic is difficult and much remains to be understood.

The time seems ripe for an attempt to develop a clearer picture of the traditional viewpoint of the Theravāda school as expressed in the latest books of the Pali Canon and more particularly in the commentarial interpretations and expansions of the canonical material. In what follows no attempt will therefore be made to differentiate earlier or 'original' meanings of technical terms but rather the commentarial explanations will normally be followed without further discussion.

My principal sources are then the works incorporated in the Pali Canon and the commentarial literature. This latter appears to have been put into writing in Ceylon in Sinhalese Prakrit over a period of some centuries, but very few additions appear to have been made after the first century A.D.[3] Although the Sinhalese originals are lost, we possess numerous recensions of this material in Pali translation. These are the commentaries (*aṭṭha-kathā*) and sub-commentaries (*ṭīkā*) of later date. Some use will be made also of the *Abhidharma-kośa* of Vasubandhu which summarizes the views of the Northern Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika schools, since this often highlights distinctive features of the Theravādin position and sometimes clarifies difficulties of interpretation.

In Childers's *Dictionary of the Pali Language* (p. 169) we read under the heading *Jhāna*:

> Meditation, contemplation; religious meditation or abstraction of the mind, mystic or abstract meditation, ecstasy, trance . . . *Jhāna* is a religious exercise productive of the highest spiritual advantage, leading after death to re-birth in one of the *Brahma* heavens, and forming the principal means of entrance into the four Paths. The four *Jhānas* are four stages of mystic meditation, whereby the believer's mind is purged from all earthly emotions, and detached as it were from the body, which remains plungėd in a profound trance.

Since Childers wrote this in 1875, the majority of translators have employed one of the terms used by him.[4]

No doubt the most literal rendering is 'meditation' but this too easily creates the impression that *jhāna* is merely systematic thinking. Technical terms of Christian mysticism, often with theistic implications, such as 'contemplation', 'mystic meditation', also 'recollection', 'rapture', are surely out of place in a Buddhist setting. 'Ecstasy' and 'trance', even if correct descriptively, are too general.[5] *Jhāna* applies in Pali usage to a very specific type of 'trance' and is, as we shall see, only relatively rarely employed with a wider application. Possibly the least misleading translation, if one is needed at all, would be 'absorption', but I would prefer to retain this as the rendering of *appaṇā* and leave *jhāna* untranslated.

The first necessity is to place *jhāna* in its religious context. The great Belgian scholar, Louis de La Vallée Poussin, drew particular attention to the existence in 'les sources bouddhiques, anciennes ou scholastiques' of two distinct theories: 'la théorie qui fait du salut une oeuvre purement ou surtout intellectuelle; la théorie qui met le salut au bout des disciplines ascétiques et extatiques'.[6]

In terms of the Theravādin literature this is the distinction between the vehicle of calm (*samatha-yāna*) and the vehicle of insight (*vipassana-yana*), based on that between concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*)—two of the fundamental concepts of Buddhism from the earliest period. Naturally both are viewed as necessary, the differences being in part a matter of degree and in part a question of the order of development.

In practice these terms have come to refer specifically to the presence or absence of the *jhānas*. One whose vehicle is calm develops proficiency in the four *jhānas* and optionally also the four formless attainments (*arūpasamāpattis*) or the various kinds of psychic power (*iddhi*). He then embarks upon the development of insight. One whose vehicle is insight requires only a stage of concentration less than that needed for the attainment of *jhāna* and may never develop it at all. The texts allow also various intermediate possibilities.[7] It should be noted that insight practice is no more optional in the Theravādin conception than in the Sarvāstivadin as described by La Vallée Poussin.

The development of insight lies largely outside the scope of the present investigation. It involves systematic investigation of the content of consciousness leading to flashes of insight and later to states with names such as 'the

signless', 'the void' and so on. Ultimately the stages of sanctity (*magga* and *phala*) arise. It is important to note that it is not by any means simply 'rationalisme' or 'connaissance spéculative', as La Vallée Poussin would have us believe. We are far closer here than has usually been appreciated to 'intuitive wisdom' and 'direct understanding' of the kind made known in relation to Zen Buddhism by D. T. Suzuki.

La Vallée Poussin also drew attention to the tension which seems to have existed between the two approaches.[8] This is particularly evinced in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* where the younger brother of Sāriputta[9] is recorded as admonishing the two parties not to criticise one another, but rather to speak praise of one another. 'For wonderful, friends, are these individuals and hard to find in the world—these who have made direct contact (*kāyena phusitvā*) with the deathless element and remain there ... For wonderful, friends, are these individuals and hard to find in the world—these who have pierced words of subtle meaning by means of wisdom and see [directly].'[10] Nor should it be forgotten that the distinction of the two schools survives to some extent today in the Theravādin countries. They frequently have separate meditation centres and it is possible to meet with individuals who belittle one or the other practice.

In the present context only the first of these approaches elicits our interest. So the first enquiry must be as to the aim of *jhāna* practice. 'This mind is, o *bhikkhus*, radiant but it is stained by stains which arrive.'[11] This passage from the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* is frequently referred to in the commentaries.[12] They understand it to mean that the natural state of the mind (*pakati-mano*) is pure and peaceful, free from all impurities and immoral states. (One is almost tempted to refer to this as 'the Doctrine of Original Sinlessness'.) The stains are in fact seen as arriving spontaneously or superimposed. For Theravāda this natural state of mind is *bhav'-aṅga-citta*, the state of the mind in deep, dreamless sleep.[13]

The purpose of concentration in this context is aptly stated by Vajirañāṇa: 'The mind which is wholly given to a single perception of a salutary kind becomes purely radiant and illuminant in its original state'.[14] This is appropriately shown by the simile for the fourth *jhāna*:

> Monks, as a monk might be sitting down who has clothed himself including his head with a white cloth, no part of his whole body would not be suffused with the white cloth. Even so, monks, a monk, having suffused this very body with a mind that is utterly pure, utterly clean, comes to be sitting down; there is no part of his whole body that is not suffused by a mind that is utterly pure, utterly clean.[15]

We find already in the *Niddesa*[16] the formal distinction of the commentaries between the non-lasting suppression (*vikkhambhana*) achieved by the *jhānas* and the final extirpation (*samuccheda*) of all immoral tendencies caused by the paths and fruits. The concept is no doubt already implicit in the *nikāyas* even for

the formless attainments. At AN III 394–7 we find the impermanence of the four *rūpa-jhāna* firmly stressed and numerous other examples could no doubt be cited. *Jhāna* practice is, then, intended only as a means to prepare the mind for understanding. It is not a goal in itself in the Buddhist context.

A considerable moral preparation is in many cases stressed in the *suttas*. The *Sāmañña-phala-sutta* gives the following preliminaries: the *bhikkhu* must observe the moral precepts (*sīla-sampanno*);[17] he must guard the sense-doors (*indriyesu gutta-dvāro*), he must possess mindfulness and clear comprehension, he must be content (*santuṭṭho*) and he must dwell in a suitably secluded place. He then suppresses the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa* and acquires the opposing qualities. More often these preliminaries seem to be taken for granted and only the hindrances are mentioned. The commentaries in fact hold that they alone are specifically opposed to the attainment of *jhāna*.

These five hindrances may be looked at in more detail. The first is *abhijjhā*, 'longing for things', or more frequently *kāma-cchanda*, 'desire for objects of the five senses'. The second is *uyāpāda-padosa*, 'the corruption of ill-will'. According to the commentary this is synonymous with anger (*kodha*).[18] The third is *thīna-m-iddha*, which may originally have meant 'increase of sleepiness', but at a very early date came to be understood as a *dvandva*, 'sloth and torpor'.[19] The fourth *uddhacca-kukkucca*, 'excitement and remorse', seems to refer to states of a mildly manic-depressive nature.[20] The last, *vicikicchā*, is literally 'desire to discern', but has the sense of 'incapacitating doubt'.[21] The simile is given of the traveller in a desert who out of fear of imaginary robbers stops his journey or even turns back. Fear of the unknown is perhaps partly also implied.

Clearly the removal of these obstacles is no mean task in itself and nor is a merely negative removal intended. In the *sutta* itself the removal of ill-will involves also 'sympathy for the good of all beings' (*sabba-pāṇa-bhūta-hitânukampī*) and similar changes are required in the other cases.[22] In one case the five hindrances are directly equated to the stains (*upakkilesa*) mentioned previously.[23] They are elsewhere likened to canals about a mountain stream which have to be shut off if the stream of the mind is to lose its turbulence.[24]

The removal of 'sloth and torpor' is of particular interest. The phrase used is: 'perceiving light, mindful, clearly conscious he purifies the mind from sloth and torpor'. The *Vibhaṅga* does not seem to consider this as more than a metaphor for clarity of thought. The commentary to the *Dīghanikāya* explains more literally: 'endowed with pure perception free from the hindrances capable of perceiving light which is seen by night as by day'.[25] Light phenomena of various different kinds are characteristic of mysticism as indeed of many unusual states of mind.[26] One cause of these seems likely to be liberation of energy experienced as light through sensory translation.[27] This may be appropriate in the present case.

In the commentarial literature the abandoning of the five hindrances is regarded as synonymous with the attainment of the first stage of concentration (*samādhi*) known as access (*upacāra*). The expression access *jhāna* is also

occasionally employed, but more often the term *jhāna* is reserved for full absorption (*appanā*) which we shall consider later. The concept of access is not known to the Pali Canon, although it does seem to be implied in the *Kathā-vatthu*.[28] A very similar idea but employing different terminology is found in Sarvāstivādin literature.[29] This would seem to imply either that it is older than the literary evidence would suggest or that it is implicit in the *sutta* formulation.

The actual techniques employed to attain *jhāna* are largely outside the scope of this enquiry and are in any case well-known. Of more immediate interest is the concept of the *nimitta*.[30] This in the older literature seems to denote the object of meditation, of whatever kind.[31] In the commentarial literature we find an important distinction into three types of *nimitta*: the preparatory (*parikamma*) *nimitta* is the initial object—a prepared disc, a part of the body, the breath and so on. In modern times objects such as a candle, a bowl of flowers, a Buddha image are also used.

Eventually it becomes possible to retain a visual or other representation of the preparatory object. This is the acquired (*uggaha-*) *nimitta*, which according to the commentarial literature is visible whether the eyes are open or closed and is perceived 'through the mind door as if seeing with the eye'.[32] Thirdly there arises the semblance (*paṭibhāga-*) *nimitta*. This is in a more abstract form which lacks irrelevant detail still present in the acquired *nimitta*. It is described as soft and delicate, much purer than the previous one.[33] It is a pure concept lacking physical reality and deriving from ideation (*sañña-ja*).[34] If then the object of concentration is, for example, the idea of blueness (*nīla-kasiṇa*), the semblance *nimitta* arises as soon as this idea is brought to mind in the same way as the reflection of the face appears immediately upon glancing at a mirror.

These three *nimittas* are not found as such in the *suttas*. The commentaries, however, understand the term *rūpa* in the canonical list of the eight spheres of mastery (*abhibhâyatana*) to refer to the preparatory object and the acquired *nimitta*[35]—and some of the specific objects are mentioned occasionally.[36] The *Kathā-vatthu* states that 'concentration arises in one enjoying mental objects as such'[37] and was certainly understood later as referring to the semblance *nimitta*.[38] The Sautrāntika in the *Abhidharma-kosá* attributes to the meditation masters (*yogâcārā*) the teaching that: 'through the power of concentration there arises for the practitioner of *dhyāna* a *rūpa* which is the object of concentration and which cannot be located because it is not an object of the sense of sight nor does it impose resistance [to the touch] because it is non-spatial.'[39] Clearly this is based upon some similar experience.

Nevertheless the most striking evidence for the antiquity of the concept is to be found in the *Upakkilesa-sutta*.[40] Here emphasis is laid on the necessity of perceiving both a shining light (*obhāsa*) and the appearance of *rūpas*.[41] This perception is hindered by a series of stains (*upakkilesa*): doubt, lack of attention, sloth and torpor, terror (*chambhitattaṃ*), elation, depression (*duṭṭhulla*), too much or too little energy, desire, various perceptions, too much thinking about *rūpas*. The commentary understands this list as a continuing process in ordered succes-

sion. Interestingly the doubt is attributed to seeing varying forms, the terror to seeing (demoniac) *dānavas, rakkhasas*, snakes and the like, while the desire is attributed to seeing a company of *devas*. These experiences are ascribed to increasing the light (*ālokaṃ vaḍḍhetvā*). Some of Spiro's contemporary Burmese informants reported visionary occurrences.[42]

In sum it may then be assumed that although the terminology is late, the substance which it describes is much earlier in date. Whether this is so or not, for these exercises the arrival of the third kind of *nimitta* is synonymous with reaching the stage of access *jhāna*. It should be noted that those forms of meditative exercise which involve the repetition of formulae and those which develop particular emotional states are envisaged as taking rather divergent courses from those which have a material object. The *Visuddhi-magga* takes these latter as the basis for its normative description and it is convenient to follow it in this.

Returning now to the *Sāmañña-phala-sutta*, we find next a description of the process leading to concentration—a description occurring very widely in early Buddhist canonical literature. 'When he sees that these five hindrances have been abandoned in himself, gladness (*pāmujja*) arises; to one who is glad, joy (*pīti*) arises; the body of one whose mind is joyful becomes calm; one whose body has become calm experiences happiness (*sukha*); the mind of one who is happy becomes concentrated (*samādhiyati*).'

The concept of *pīti*, translated above as joy, is perhaps central to the understanding of early Buddhism. Although a most frequently employed technical term in a number of differing contexts, its importance has often been overlooked. This has the result that early Buddhism comes to seem a somewhat dry and unemotional form of religion, even perhaps desiccated and intellectual. At DN III 241 we find five alternatives, each setting in motion the process described above: hearing a sermon, teaching *dhamma*, reciting *dhamma*, studying *dhamma*. Only the fifth, *samādhi-nimitta*, is a subject of meditation as such. To these others can easily be added—worship of relics, recollecting the qualities of the Triple Gem, and in later times the cult of the image. From these ingredients derives the not to be underestimated ceremonial and devotional side of Theravadā Buddhism.[43]

How then do the commentaries interpret the experience of *pīti*? The description given in the *Visuddhi-magga* is worth careful consideration. Here five kinds of *pīti* are enumerated in ascending order. Minor (*khuddikā*) *pīti* is able to excite the hairs on the body. In fact according to the sub-commentary it does so lightly and subsides, not to reappear.[44] Momentary (*khaṇikā*) *pīti* is like flashes of lightning from time to time. Descending (*okkantikā*) *pīti* descends again and again upon the body, as a wave descends upon the sea-shore, and subsides. Transporting (*ubbegā*) *pīti* (or one might translate frightening *pīti*) is powerful. It makes the body buoyant and reaches the degree of causing it to jump in the air. The commentaries cite two examples of this levitation, both examples of strong religious devotion. The last kind, pervading (*pharaṇā*) *pīti*, pervades all through the whole body so that it is like a bag filled by blowing or like a rock-cave flooded

by a great mass of water. According to the sub-commentary: 'Pervading [*pīti*] is much more excellent than transporting [*pīti*] due to absence of motion and longlastingness.'[45] It is the fifth kind which leads to full *jhāna*.[46]

The modern literature in Thailand apparently contains much more detail as to the physical and visionary side-effects of *pīti*.[47] In any case the intensity of the experience is already made clear in the frequent canonical similies which stress the superiority both in degree and in quality of the pleasure arising from *jhāna* to any pleasure deriving from the senses. Reference is probably intended here particularly though not exclusively to sexual pleasure.

A translation of the term *pīti* merely as 'pleasurable interest' or as 'zest' or 'exuberance' is then inadequate from the point of view of conveying the intensity of the later stages of *pīti*. The commentaries interpret the word *pāmujja* which precedes *pīti* in the canonical description given above as immature *pīti* (*taruṇa-pīti*). This would seem to require a fairly strong translation. In some ways the most suitable English word for the *sutta* usage would be 'love', a term of suitably wide connotation in English, but if this is felt to be now too debased in usage, no doubt the best alternative where translation is required is the more usual 'joy'.[48]

Particularly important here is the common Indian use of *prīti* to refer to the joyful and blissful aspects of family and marital love. In Pali likewise a distinction is found between *pīti* associated with sensual passions (*sāmisa*) and dissociated from sensual passions (*nirāmisa*). *Pīti* is also explained by the term *ānanda*;[49] in fact this is the substitute adopted in the *Yoga-sūtra* as a factor of concentration (*samādhi*).

It is interesting to compare the description of his experience of meditation given by one of Spiro's Burmese informants: 'There is a tingling sensation in every part of the body, much more pleasurable than any sexual experience, including orgasm. In orgasm, the pleasure is restricted to one organ whereas this meditation pleasure suffuses the entire body; it is felt in all of one's organs'.[50]

A few more of the commentarial glosses seem worth noting. In the *Vimuttimagga* it is explained as a sixfold satisfying (*pīṇanā*) of the mind produced through sense-desire, through faith, through absence of depression (*akukkucca*), through a secluded state (*viveka*), through concentration (*samādhi*) or through the factor of awakening (*bojjhaṅga*).[51] This is not taken up in later works, where *pīti* is usually explained as having two senses; the sense of causing delight (*tappeti* i.e. 〈 *prī*) and the sense of increasing (*vaḍḍheti* i.e. 〈 *pī*). It has the characteristic mark of great fondness, the property of strengthening mind and body or the property of suffusing, and the manifestation of a state of elation.[52] 'The property of suffusing' is understood in the sub-commentaries as meaning 'the property of pervading the body with subtle forms (*paṇītehi rūpehi*)'.

Another definition is 'satisfaction of the heart'.[53] According to the *Dīgha-nikāya* commentary *pīti* arises 'causing the whole body to shake', but the sub-commentary understands this to refer specifically to the stage of descending *pīti*.[54] An *udāna* is also explained as an utterance produced spontaneously under

the influence of *pīti*.[55] Again *pīti* accompanied by greed brings excitement and is an obstacle to *jhāna* in contrast to *pīti* without greed.[56]

It is clear that *pīti* refers to all the stages of joy between a mildly pleasurable interest and an ecstatic transport of delight. The English word which historically conveyed this range of meaning (mild interest, sexual pleasure, mystical love) is love, although *pīti* refers rather to a state or experience than to a feeling directed towards an object. Indeed the commonplace contrast of mysticism between carnal love and mystical love bears a family resemblance to the various uses of *pīti*. *Pīti* is, however, too central and fundamental a concept in early Buddhism for any portmanteau translation to be generally acceptable and it must surely take its place in the list of terms best retained untranslated.

In the present context the particular importance of *pīti* lies in its inclusion in descriptions of the first *jhāna*. This is described in the *Majjhimanikāya* as 'abandoning five factors, possessing five factors'.[57] Not surprisingly the former are the five hindrances, while the latter five factors given here constitute the standard list of factors of *jhāna* as repeated in later texts. It may be noted that we do not find here or elsewhere in the Pali Canon the one for one correspondence of the two lists cited in the commentaries: '. . . it is said in the *Peṭaka* that concentration is the enemy of desire for objects of sense, *pīti* of ill-will, initial thought (*vitakka*) of sloth and torpor, happiness (*sukha*) of excitement and remorse, sustained thought (*vicāra*) of incapacitating doubt . . .'[58]. This passage appears to have been lost from out text of the semi-canonical *Peṭakôpadeṣa*.[59]

The first two of these factors of *jhāna* are *vitakka* and *vicāra*, translated above as initial thought and sustained thought. Historically these are little more than two synonyms for 'thinking', but in Buddhist usage they are given a distinct meaning which is followed also by the *Yoga-sūtra*.[60] The first denotes the directing of the mind to an object of thought or imagination while the second-indicates rather the discipline which keeps it there.[61] They are also described as the requisites for speech (*vacī-saṅkhāra*).[62]

The next two factors of *jhāna* are *pīti* and *sukha*. In the technical sense with which we are again concerned, the former is differentiated as 'delight through obtaining sight of the thing desired' as opposed to *sukha* which is 'experiencing the flavour of what has been obtained'.[63] The difference intended appears to be between a relatively excited state (*cetaso ubbilāvitā*) and a more calm and peaceful type of happiness.

The remaining factor *cittass' ek'-aggatā*, literally 'one-pointedness of mind', is considered to be synonymous with concentration as a *jhāna* factor. It refers specifically to a state in which the mind is absorbed in a single object. In the present context it is the ability to keep the attention, without wavering or trembling, aware only of the object of meditation. It should be noticed that this fifth factor, although absent from the ancient formula of the first *jhāna*, is clearly implied by the epithet born of concentration (*samādhi-ja*) applied to the second *jhāna*.

Fully developed, these five factors constitute *jhāna*, but it is important to note

that they may already be present in a weaker form in normal consciousness. So we read in the *Visuddhi-magga*: 'But although these five factors are also [present] at the moment of access and moreover are stronger in access than in normal consciousness,' they are even stronger here (i.e. in absorption) than in access and acquire the characteristics of the form sphere'.[64]

How exactly are we to understand this distinction between access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*) and absorption concentration (*appaṇā-samādhi*)? The description of the commentaries is precise: 'In access the factors have not become strong. Just as a baby boy lifts himself up and stands but again and again falls to the ground because his limbs (*aṅga*) have not become strong, even so, when access has arisen, because the factors (*aṅga*) have not become strong, the mind at one moment makes the *nimitta* its object and at another moment descends into *bhav'-aṅga*'.[65]

So the process of developing concentration has reached a point at which there is a tendency towards loss of consciousness. But when full absorption is reached, '. . . just as a strong man might rise from his seat and stand even for a whole day, even so, when absorption concentration has arisen, the mind breaks the flow of *bhav'-aṅga* at a single attempt and stands for a whole night and day, carrying on by means of a succession of wholesome *javanas*'. Stripped of the technical terminology of Theravādin psychology, this is to say that the state of *jhāna* is not merely conscious, it is much more conscious than the normal state of mind.

This requires some elaboration. According to the Theravādin explanation of the process of consciousness (*citta-vīthi*), the series of thought moments which produces the illusion of a continuous entity occurs in a complex manner, which may be approximately described as two principal modes together with a number of transitional modes.[66] The two most frequent modes are *bhav'-aṅga* and *javana*. The former is the type of consciousness met with in an unmixed form in deep dreamless sleep. *Javana* or swift-moving consciousness is the kind with which good or bad mental acts are normally performed. Ordinary consciousness consists of a complex admixture of the two principal modes together with the transitional modes. In this way the varying phenomena of perception can be ingeniously accounted for; for example very clear perceptions involve a higher proportion of *javana* moments, while less clear perceptions (as in dreams or at the margins of attention) involve a lower proportion.[67]

In effect normal consciousness consists of a constant flickering between *bhav'-aṅga* and *javana*. In the *jhāna* state this flickering is brought to a stop and a form of *javana* consciouness alone continues. This is considered to be a higher consciousness (*mahaggata-citta; adhicitta*), particularly in comparison with the normal state in which less than half of the thought moments are consciously experienced. The bulk of the normal waking mental process is conceived of as below the threshold of awareness.

Before finally taking leave of access concentration it is perhaps desirable to note that from the arising of this stage direct knowledge (*abhiññā*) occurs. It is

therefore here that the first parting of the ways arises. From this point it is possible to embark upon insight practice without entering *jhāna*. If *jhāna* practice is undertaken, it will be necessary to return therefrom in order to develop insight. It is perhaps now clear why it was felt necessary to reject La Vallée Poussin's understanding of insight as 'connaissance spéculative'. We have already passed beyond the realm of the normal rational process.

The clear distinction given above by the commentaries needs however some qualification. It would appear that for the beginner absorption is only achieved for a very brief period.[68] The length of time depends at first upon the quality and length of the preliminary exercises but ultimately upon the skill acquired in the exercise of the five masteries (*vasitā*). These are first recorded as a list in the *Paṭisambhidā-magga*, but they have a much greater antiquity.[69] The intention appears to be to habituate the process of entry into (trance-like) absorption and to bring it completely under voluntary control.

The first of these, adverting (*āvajjanā*), appears to be the ability to bring the *jhāna* factors into consciousness at speed. In other words the ability to reach a stage close to access at will. The second, attaining (*samāpajjanā*), is the ability to enter into 'trance' as desired. This would however naturally last a period of time corresponding to the preliminary work. So the third is will (*adhiṭṭhāna*) by which the meditator predetermines the period which the *jhāna* will last. Then comes emerging (*vuṭṭhāna*), which refers to speed in the actual process of withdrawal from 'trance'. The last is recollection (*paccavekkhaṇā*) which is apparently the ability to maintain the *jhāna* factors in consciousness continuously. According to the commentary this process of withdrawal can be compared to waking from sleep.[70] Indeed the whole in its developed form is reminiscent of the ability of some individuals to go to sleep at will or for a predetermined duration. The final result is apparently that the individual can enter and leave *jhāna* within seconds.

The meditator may then attempt to achieve the higher *jhānas*. This is a process of gradual simplification by eliminating the factors until only one-pointedness of mind is left. In the very frequent old formula cited hitherto, initial and sustained thought are eliminated to attain the second *jhāna*, *pīti* is eliminated to attain the third, and happiness to attain the fourth and last.[71] A variant list is found occasionally in the *nikāyas*, which divides the first into two and combines the third and fourth into one.[72] Sometimes we find another list in three sections:

1 *samādhi* with both initial and sustained thought, with only the latter, with neither;
2 *samādhi* with or without *pīti*;
3 *samādhi* with delight (*sāta*) or with equanimity (*upekkhā*).[73]

The Theravādin *abhidhamma* organizes this into an alternative list of five *jhānas*. The Sarvāstivāda preferred to interpose a kind of half-way stage (*dhyānântara*) between the first and second *jhānas*.[74] In any case the difference

seems to be mainly terminological, as so often with the disputes of the early schools. Both were clearly based upon the same material which must therefore be assumed to be of some antiquity.

We should not however make the mistake of supposing that the list of *jhāna* factors represents the totality of the qualities experienced therein. The old formula itself adds a number of others at different stages. In particular we may note internal repose (*ajjhattaṃ sampasāda*) for the second *jhāna*, mindfulness (*sati*) and clear comprehension (*sampajāna*) for the third and purification of mindfulness by means of equanimity for the fourth. According to the commentaries, however, these qualities are present also in the first *jhāna* in lesser degree. In the case of mindfulness the commentary lays some stress on the point. 'For even mere access does not succeed for one of confused mindfulness without clear comprehension, let alone absorption.'[75]

In this the commentaries are clearly following an old tradition. In the *Majjhima-nikāya* we find a list of *dhammas* present in the first *jhāna* which includes among others energy (*viriya*), mindfulness, equanimity and attention (*manasi-kāra*).[76] The *Dhamma-saṅgani* gives a much longer list, which is identical with the list given for consciousness, defined as normal, happy and wholesome.[77] So rather surprisingly the *abhidhamma* does not reckon that *jhāna* consciousness is strongly distinct in make-up from the better kinds of normal consciousness, as far as the accompanying factors (*cetasika*) are concerned. Good qualities are no doubt to be understood as much more powerful, and purer, through being unmixed subliminally with opposite qualities. Hatred in any form is totally absent. Moreover physical pain is not felt. In fact by the time the fourth *jhāna* is reached, physical pleasure, as well as both pleasant and unpleasant emotion, have been gradually eliminated.[78]

At this point it seems worthwhile to digress slightly and consider the exact definition of the term 'trance'. The Concise O.E.D. gives the medical sense of the term as: 'state of insensibility to external surroundings with partial suspension of vital functions, catalepsy, also hypnotic state'. Under 'catalepsy' it gives: 'suspension of sensation and consciousness accompanied by rigidity of the body'. It does not appear that any single usage commands general agreement in the literature of experimental psychology. For the sake of clarity it is then necessary to define the usage here followed.

In the first instance the term 'trance' is understood to be applicable through the varying degrees from light trance to deep trance, comprising such phenomena as increased suggestibility, anaesthesia, hallucinations of various kinds and ultimately catalepsy. Secondly the term is understood as being independent of the occurrence of partial or complete amnesia. In other words a lucid trance is also possible in the cases of both light and deep trance. It is also assumed that the capacity to experience trance is a normal function not necessarily pathological.

As far as *jhāna* is concerned it is by now amply clear that we are not dealing with an unconscious state. If we are to understand *jhāna* as being a trance state,

it must be as a lucid trance. It is equally clear that it possesses many of the characteristics of trance. The mind does not perceive through the five senses and is incapable of speech from the first *jhāna*.[79] By the fourth all bodily activities have ceased.[80] The movement of the breath is explicity mentioned and the heart-beat doubtless implied.[81] A form of catalepsy of the body is the rule in *jhāna*. Later texts elevate this to the status of a proposition: 'The *javana* of absorption control even posture (*iriyā-patha*)'.[82] The allied concept of mind-produced (*citta-samuṭṭhāna*) matter is used as the theoretical justification for such commonplaces of mysticism as survival without eating food, passing through the air, walking on water and the like.[83]

Many also of the phenomena ancillary to visionary states can be recorded. Shaking of the body,[84] several different kinds of light,[85] the acquiring of a mental body,[86] a special type of breathing distinct from the normal,[87] are all mentioned. Some too of the miraculous occurrences, conversations with deities and the like so frequent in the Pali Canon, are surely to be considered as genuine accounts of visionary experiences. To these one should perhaps add (in the development of insight) a relatively early stage at which the meditator thinks he is already enlightened.[88] All these phenomena are more or less normal to visionary states the world over. Nowadays one would of course add hypnotic states, drug-induced states and experiences resulting from sensory deprivation to the list.[89]

The question then arises as to whether *jhāna* is simply a normal trance state, no different from those occurring in auto-hypnosis or under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs. Unfortunately the question only has to be raised to realize the difficulties involved in answering it. Most of these are doubtless the province of psychologists or medical researchers as much as of students of religion.

What is, however, of interest here are the distinctions which have been made in this matter within Buddhism itself. At least in modern writings the position is clear:

> If the meditator notices that his meditation sessions are improving dramatically—he is attaining trance-like states of concentration—and yet there is no change in his daily life itself, he should be very wary and examine carefully the content and quality of his meditation sessions. It may well be that what he has been calling tranquillity and concentration is, in fact, a state of self-induced hypnotism. The latter, though interesting as a mental phenomenon, has no place in the context of Buddhist meditation . . .[90]

But is any clear distinction to be found in earlier Buddhist thought between a lucid mediumistic or orgiastic trance and *jhāna*? The answer is, I think, that there is; to my mind the clearest statement is given in the *Abhidharma-kośa*.

In this non-Theravādin text we find a list of the four defiled (*kliṣṭa*) *dhyānas*.[91] In these the qualities of *prīti*, happiness, repose, mindfulness, clear comprehension and purification are absent. With this may be compared a *sutta*

in which Ānanda distinguishes *jhāna* praised by the Lord from that not praised by the Lord, which is accompanied by the five hindrances.[92] Also the use of the term *jhāna* in the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* seems very close to the view here expressed in the *Kośa*.[93] One could add also the frequent emphasis upon right concentration (as opposed to wrong) in the *suttas* and commentaries.

Presumably then if the Theravāda did not use the term defiled *jhāna*, it was because it was wished to emphasize the difference of Buddhist *jhāna* from any ordinary trance state. This is the argument of the objector in the Kośa. On this basis we should understand the difference to lie in three directions: firstly, in the presence in *jhāna* of mindfulness and clear comprehension, i.e. a total absence of amnesia. Mindfulness is in fact sometimes described as the enemy of wrong concentration.[94] Secondly we might add the presence of *pīli* and happiness in the first two *jhānas*—necessary to dispel the hindrances of anger on the one hand and excitement and remorse on the other. Thirdly the distinction between *rūpâvacara* consciousness and *kāmâvacara* consciousness lays stress on the sharp differentiation in kind between *jhāna* consciousness and any normal consciousness even if wholesome and accompanied by the five factors as in the case of access concentration.

After wandering afield into states which are, in the Buddhist conception, far from *jhāna*, perhaps we should return and remind ourselves of the positive importance ascribed to the experience. Possibly we can accord some evidential value to the words of the Burmese Buddhist S. Z. Aung, written at the beginning of this century:

> ...attainment in *jhāna* is a very important psychological moment, marking an epoch in his mental experience for the person who succeeds in commanding it. He has for the first time in his life tasted something unlike anything he has ever experienced before. The feeling is simply indescribable. He felt an entirely changed person, purged from the Hindrances. He was living a new, higher life, the life of a god of the heavens called *Rūpa*; experiencing the consciousness believed to be habitual to those dwelling there.[95]

Space does not permit any consideration of the experiences of the four *arūpasamāpatti* and the psychic powers (*iddhi*). We may, however, note that the technique of attainment of *jhāna* is informative as to its general role in Buddhist practice. It is apparently not possible to go directly from a lower *jhāna* to a higher.[96] In each case it is necessary to return to a more normal state of consciousness. The interpretation of this seems clear. *Jhāna* is conceived of as calming and purifying the normal consciousness. This achieved, a higher *jhāna* becomes possible, which in turn further purifies the normal state. The process obviously continues some way, but, although it could no doubt be quite long-lasting, it cannot achieve a permanent improvement. To that extent it might seem valueless. However the improved normal state of consciousness is itself of

use in the process of increasing awareness by means of the vehicle of insight which constitutes the proper aim of Buddhist practice.

To sum up, *jhāna* practice involves the systematic induction of a very specific type of 'trance' state under controlled conditions which necessarily require a previous clarity of consciousness and a well-balanced, happy frame of mind. It is clear that the use of the term 'trance' in this context is only satisfactory if it is understood in a strictly medical sense as referring to specific physiological phenomena. *Jhāna* is certainly not trance in the sense of a dull stupor nor does it involve catalepsy in the sense of 'suspension of consciousness'. Even a lucid trance, if it was accompanied by the five hindrances, would be considered quite distinct from *jhāna* as an aspect of Buddhist practice.

Notes

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1 E.g. the *rūpâvacara-citta* of *Dhamma-saṅgani* or the *jhāna-paccaya* of *Paṭṭhāna*.
2 The most detailed accounts of Buddhist meditation based upon Pali sources are given by E. Conze: *Buddhist Meditation*, London 1956 and P. Vajirañāṇa: *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice*, Colombo 1962. I have not had access to F. Heiler: *Die Buddhistische Versenkung*, Munich 1918. See also C. E. Rhys Davids: *Buddhist Psychology*, London, 2nd ed., 1924, pp. 105 foll.; M. Eliade: *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, London 1958, pp. 162 foll.; 395 foll. (refs.).
3 Cf. E. W. Adikaram: *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Colombo 1946, repr. 1953, p. 41.
4 A brief survey of some P.T.S. translators gave the following: ecstasy, ecstatic meditation, musing, contemplative rapture, *jhāna*-rapture, meditation. The word is left untranslated by T. W. Rhys Davids and a number of other scholars.
5 Contemplation and meditation both refer to specific stages of the *via mystica*. Recollection refers to particular states of prayer, while rapture implies seizure and removal from the body by a divinity. 'Ecstasy' is sometimes used in contrast to ecstasy, but this opposition appears to highlight a rather secondary feature.
6 L. de La Vallée Poussin: 'Musīla et Nārada. Le Chemin Du Nirvāṇa', *M.C.B.* V, 1937, pp. 189–222. See also Eliade: op. cit., pp. 173–177.
7 AN II 157, 1–26 declares that arahatship is reached in four ways:

   (a) The monk develops insight after calm (*samatha-pubbaṅ-gamaṃ vipassanaṃ*) and the path of sanctity arises.
   (b) He develops calm after insight and the path of sanctity arises. The commentary (Mp III 143, 4–6) interprets this as referring to someone who is by nature an obtainer of insight. At Vism XXII 46 it is stated that at the path moment calm and insight are 'coupled together in the sense that neither one exceeds the other' (Ñāṇamoli).
   (c) He develops calm and insight coupled together, etc. The commentator under-

stands this to mean that he attains the first *jhāna* and then practises insight in reference to the experience of that *jhāna*, continuing in this way through all eight attainments (*samāpatti*). At AN IV 422 foll. it is explicitly stated that the goal can be attained while reviewing any one of these from the first *jhāna* onwards.

(d) The mind of the monk is possessed by excitement with reference to mental states (*dhamm'-uddhacca-viggahītaṃ*). When the mind settles down within, becomes steady, unified and concentrated, the path of sanctity arises. According to the commentary the mental states are calm and insight and the excitement is that known as the ten stains of insight (*vipassanôpakilesā*), while according to Paṭis-a 584, 32 this is pure insight *suddha-vipassanā*). See Paṭis II 92–103, Vism XX 106, Vism Trsl. p. 739 n., and Mahasi Sayadaw: *The Progress of Insight*, Kandy 1965, pp. 10–13, 46–48.

8 *Mélanges Lanman*, 1929, pp. 135–136.
9 Mp III 379, 7.
10 AN III 356, 14–21; the commentary understands this latter wisdom in two ways, the first of which is 'insight and path-wisdom (*saha-vipassanāya magga-paññāya*)'.
11 AN I 10, 11–13; according to Mp I 60, 16 the *upakkilesā* arrive at the moment of *javana*.
12 E.g. As 140, 22–29; Dh-a I 23, 15–19.
13 Mil 299, 11–301, 6, but see below.
14 Vajiranāṇa: op. cit., p. 56.
15 MN Trsl. (Horner 1954) I 332, 3–8. The smile occurs at: DN I 76, 3–9; MN I 277, 33–278, 5; II 16, 29–17, 1; III 94, 15–21; AN III 27, 5–10.
16 Nidd I 7, 11 foll.
17 The text in fact details the *sīla* needed by the *bhikkhu* at some length (DN I 63, 13–70, 6). A briefer, somewhat divergent series is given at MN I 354, 31–356, 22. The individual components of course occur very frequently.
18 Sv I 211, 15–19.
19 BHSD s.v. *styāna-middha*; Th Trsl. (Norman 1969), 74 n.
20 *Uddhacca* < *uddhata s.v. Gāndhārī Dharmapada* p. 280. Defined at Dhs 86, 38–39 ≠ 205, 11–12 as *avūpasamo cetaso vikkhepo bhantattaṃ cittassa*—in other words distracted and excited states of mind (cf 'scatter-brained'). PED is clear here, but BHSD s.v. *auddhatya* seems to miss the mark. Abhidh-k-bh (N. 1970) II 26 has *auddhatyam cetaso 'vyupaśamaḥ*, which the *Vyākhayā* explains: 'the *caitasika dharma* which gives rise to bodily restlessness (*kāyauddhatya*) such as dancing, singing, sexual passion and adornment of dress'. For *kukkucca* see Dhs 205, 14–17 and BHSD s.v. *kaukṛtya*. Historically the meaning is 'evil deeds', but in the Buddhist literature it normally refers to one's response to one's supposed evil deeds—remorse or guilt concerning imagined wrong acts of commission or ommission.
21 Dhs 205, 20–24 explains as having doubt (*kaṅkhati*) in respect of teacher, *dhamma*, community, training, past, future, past and future, and in respect of *dhammas* dependently originated through specific conditionality (*ida-paccayatā-paṭicca-samuppannesu*).
22 Cf Paṭis I 46, 35 foll.
23 AN III 16, 4–17, 5.
24 AN III 63, 12 foll.
25 Sv I 211, 21 after AN III 323, 14–17; see also Vibh 254, 13–16; Mp III 357, 27–358, 3; DN III 223, 4 foll.
26 See E. Arbman: *Ecstasy or Religious Trance*, Vol. I, *Vision and Ecstasy*, Uppsala, 1963, pp. 297 foll., 316–334.
27 A. J. Deikman: "Deautomatization and the Mystic Experience" in C. T. Tart: *Altered States of Consciousness*, New York, 1969, p. 38.

28 Kv Trsl. pp. 327–329. The earliest occurrence of *upacāra* in this sense appears to be in the *Vimuttimagga* of Upatissa (Vim Trsl. pp. 79–80), but *appanā* (sic) appears at Peṭ 168, 5.
29 E.g. Abhidh-k VI 47; VIII 22. These eight *sāmantakas* ('recueillement liminaire') are very similar to the eight *upacāras*—cp. Vism-mhṭ (cited Vism Trsl. III 5 n. 4).
30 Vism IV 28–31.
31 Cf Th 85; 584; AN III 27, 13–15; 320–322; DN III 278; 1; etc., but see Vism Trsl. III 116 n. and Vajirañāṇa: op. cit., pp. 31–34.
32 Abhidh-s (E[e] 1968) 387, 2 ... *cakkhunā passantasséva mano-dvārassa āpātham āgataṃ* ...; cp. Vism IV 30 ... *yadā nimmīletvā āvajjantassa ummīlitakāle viya āpāthaṃ āgacchati* ... and Abhidh-av 860–861.
33 Vism IV 31; Vism-mhṭ (S[e] 1925) I 214, 1.
34 Vism IV 31: *Kevalaṃ hi samādhi-lābhino upaṭṭhānákāra-mattaṃ sañña-jam etan ti.* 'For this is born of the idea [and] just a mere type of production on the part of the obtainer of concentration.' (*Sañña-ja* must here refer to the idea of an element or colour which is the object of *kasiṇa* practice.) Abhidh-s (E[e] 1968) 387, 7–10: ... *yadā tap-paṭibhāgaṃ vatthu-dhamma-vimuccitaṃ paññatti-saṅkhātaṃ bhāvanā-mayam ālambanaṃ citte sannisinnaṃ samappitaṃ hoti, tadā taṃ paṭibhāga-nimittaṃ samuppannan ti pavuccati.* '... when an object similar to this, lacking physical reality, reckoned as a concept, produced by [meditation] practice is settled and fixed in the mind, then the semblance *nimitta* is declared to have arisen.' (*Paṭibhāga* appears to be used with a double meaning of a) similar to the acquired *nimitta* and b) arising immediately with the idea like a reflection in a mirror.) cp Vim Trsl. pp. 77–78; Abhidh-av 874; Namar-p 1056.
35 Vajirañāṇa: op. cit., pp. 481–483; for refs. see P.T.C. s.v. *abhibháyatana.*
36 C. A. F. Rhys Davids: op. cit., pp. 109–110; P.T.C. s.v. *odāta-kasiṇa*, etc.
37 Kv Trsl. p. 331.
38 Kv-a 174, 1–2.
39 Abhidh-k-bh (N[e] 1970) IV 4; *Taira yogácārā upadiśanti: dhyāyināṃ samādhi-viṣayarūpaṃ samādhi-prabhāvād utpadyate, cakṣur-indriyáviṣayatvād anidarśanam, deśanávaraṇād apratigham iti.*
40 MN III 157, 24 foll.
41 ... *obhāsañ c'eva sañjānāma dassanañ ca rūpānaṃ.* See Ps IV 207 and MN Trsl. (Horner 1959) III; cp. also Ja I 106, 21–22. For the seeing of various 'images', see Vim Trsl. p. 159.
42 M. E. Spiro: *Buddhism and Society*, London, 1971, p. 55.
43 See Vibh-a 347, 27 foll.
44 Vism IV 94–99 ≠ As 115, 27–118, 15 ≠ Paṭis-a I 182, 26–183, 30; Vism-mhṭ (S[e] 1925) I 245 = As-mṭ (C[e] 1938) 66, 27–29: *Khuddikā lahuṃ loma-haṃsana-mattaṃ katvā bhinnā na puna uppajjati. Khaṇikā bahulaṃ uppajjati.*
45 Ibid. *Ubbegato pharaṇā niccalatā cira-ṭṭhitikattā ca paṇītatarā.*
46 Cp *Vibhāṣā* 140, 1 (cited Abhidh-k Trsl. VIII p. 180 n.), but the list of the five *pīti* appears to be purely Theravādin and does not appear in any extant Pali work before Buddhaghosa and Buddhadatta.
47 Paññāvaḍḍho: 'An Approach to Meditation', *Kalpa*, Vol. I No. I, pp. 23–24. I am indebted to B. Poonyathiro for information concerning a somewhat more detailed Thai list. A variant Pali version is found in the *Vimutti-magga-dassana* vss 55–90 and passim (edited with other material under the title of *Vimutti-magga* by G. Ratanajoti and K. Ratanapāla, Colombo 1963).
48 But see Vism Trsl. p. 85 n. 6 and C. A. F. Rhys Davids: op. cit., pp. 187–190.
49 Sv I 53, 22.
50 Spiro: op. cit., p. 56.

51 P. V. Bapat: *Vimuttimagga and Visuddhimagga*, Poona 1937, p. 47.
52 E.g. Vism IV 94 foll.; Abhidh-av 18, 25–26; As-mṭ (C^e 1938) 66, 25–26; Vism-mhṭ (C^e 1928) I 140, 13–15; Abhidh-av-ṭ (C^e 1961) 117, 31–37. See also Dhs 10, 24–27; As 143, 13–33.
53 Bv-a 151, 12: *hadaya-tuṭṭhin*.
54 Sv I 217, 7–8; Sv-pṭ I 340, 11–14.
55 Sv-pṭ I 273, 19–22; Spk I 60, 21–27.
56 Sv I 53, 26 foll.; Sv-pṭ I 78, 22 foll. cp. also Sv-pṭ I 134, 22; II 113, 6.
57 MN I 294–295.
58 Sp I 143, 27–29 = Vism IV 86; cp. Abhidh-av vss 909–917.
59 Peṭ Trsl. (Ñāṇamoli), Appendix, sections 3 and 8.
60 *Yoga-sūtra* I 17 and commentaries.
61 See in particular S. Z. Aung: *Compendium*, pp. 238–239; P. S. Jaini: *Abhidharma-dipa*, Patna, 1959, pp. 84–88. Texts: Dhs 10, 16–23; Mil 62, 24–63, 3; Pet 142, 3–143, 3; Vim Trsl. pp. 86–88; Vism IV 88–92; Abhidh-av 18, 17–23; Abhidh-av-ṭ (C^e 1961) 117, 9–30.
62 MN I 301, 17–29 ≠ SN IV 293, 9–28.
63 E.g. Sp 145, 11–12.
64 Vism IV 108.
65 Vism IV 33; cp. Abhidh-av vss 877–880.
66 For the commentarial accounts of the *citta-vīthi*, see: Abhidh-av (C^e 1954) vss 376 474; Vism XIV 111–124; Abhidh-s (E^e 1968) p. 202 foll. Also E. R. Sarathchandra; *Buddhist Psychology of Perception*, Colombo 1958; *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* III 17–20.
67 The theory of the *citta-vīthi* is an early commentarial elaboration of the *abhidhamma* explanation of consciousness, itself developed on the basis of *sutta* material (cf. Ñāṇamoli: Vism Trsl. IV 33 n.). The kind of explanation of experiences connected with *jhāna* (and *magga*) which is the subject of the present enquiry seems to be pre-supposed at Paṭṭh I 159, 25–28; 160, 20–28; 169, 28–33.
68 Vism IV 78; Abhidh-av (C^e 1954) vss 894 foll; Abhidh-s (E^e 1968) 224, 14–17.
69 Paṭis I 100, 1–24; the *vasitā* are referred to with a somewhat variant terminology at SN III 263, 21–278, 17; AN III 311, 27–30; 427, 22–428, 6. Also DN III 212, 17; AN I 94, 21. Commentarial account at Vism IV 131–136.
70 Nidd-a I 318, 24–27; Abhidh-av-ṭ (C^e 1961) 356, 12–17.
71 For references see P.T.C. s.v.
72 E.g. DN III 219, 19–20 = 274, 25–27 ≠ SN IV 360, 12–15 ≠ 362, 30 foll.
73 E.g. MN III 162, 13–25 = AN IV 300, 4 foll.
74 Abhidh-k VIII 22–23; Kv 569, 19 foll.
75 Sp I 151, 18 foll. = Vism IV 173 = Paṭis-a 1 189, 14–16.
76 MN III 25, 15–18 and passim; cp also DN I 196, 10–12 and passim.
77 Dhs 31, 1 foll.
78 SN V 213, 9 foll.; Sp I 153, 8 foll, = Vism IV 185.
79 SN IV 217, 5–6; AN V 135, 1; Kv Trsl. 120–123; 331.
80 E.g. DN III 270, 22; AN V 31, 27.
81 AN V 135, 3; SN IV 217, 8–9.
82 Abhidh-s (E^e 1968) 301, 26; Abhidh-s-mhṭ (C^e 1898) 113, 19–24.
83 Abhidh-s Trsl. (E^e 1968) 305–306.
84 Sv I 217, 7–8; Paṭis I 184, 35 foll.; 165, 24–166, 26.
85 See above—notes 25–27; 40–41; some further references: Paṭis-a III 589, 2–8; Mp III 357, 27–358, 3; IV 143, 1; Spk III 252, 17–18 and P.T.C. s.v. *āloka* and *abhāsa*.
86 DN I 77, 9–25 ≠ MN II 17, 23 foll.; cp DN I 34, 12 foll., etc.
87 Paṭis II 509, 26–28; Vism Trsl. VIII 168 n. 46.

88 Paṭis II 101, 1 foll.; Vism XX 106; Abhidh-av 1282; Mahasi Sayadaw; op. cit., pp. 10–13.
89 See Tart: op. cit.
90 H. Saddhātissa: *The Buddha's Way*, London, 1971, p. 78.
91 Abhidh-k VIII 10; Trsl. VIII pp. 132, 160–161.
92 MN III 13, 33.
93 Nyanaponika: *Abhidhamma Studies*, Kandy, 1965, p. 56.
94 Vism XVI 83 and 96; this seems to be implied by the lists in the *Dhamma-sangani* e.g. pp. 31 foll.; 75 foll.).
95 S. Z. Aung: op. cit., p. 57, 26–35.
96 The *Visuddhi-magga* description (Chaps. III, IV, X) is clear; at each stage the access *jhāna* has the factors of the *jhāna* below it. This view is clearly stated in the *Kathāvatthu* (Kv 565, 30–569, 14) and seems to be implied in the *nikāyas* by passages which juxtapose forms like *vuṭṭhahitvā* and *samāpajjitvā*. See DN II 156, 4–34; SN I 158, 3 foll.; AN V 157, 27 foll. and references above note 69.

21

THE 'FIVE POINTS' AND THE ORIGINS OF THE BUDDHIST SCHOOLS

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1. The historical background

The history of Buddhism in India between the death of the founder and the beginning of the Suṅga period is remarkably little known. Apart from the account of the first two communal recitations (*saṅgīti*) or Councils and a certain amount of information relating to the reign of the Emperor Aśoka, we are largely dependent upon traditional Buddhist accounts of the origin of the eighteen schools. As Frauwallner has commented: "These accounts are late, uncertain and contradictory, and cannot be relied upon blindly".[1] The number eighteen is probably symbolic in nature and should perhaps not be taken too seriously. Nevertheless it is clear that there is a generally accepted tradition that in the course of the second and third centuries after the Buddha's *mahāparinibbāna* the *saṃgha* divided into a number of teacher's lineages (*ācariyakula*)[2] or doctrines (*vāda*;[3] *ācariyavāda*[4]) or fraternities (*nikāya*).[5] At a later date these terms became in effect synonymous, but this may well not have been the case earlier.

In the early centuries AD the Sinhalese commentators and chroniclers assembled the data available to them and constructed a consistent chronology of the early history of Buddhism and of the kings of Magadha. The absolute chronology which they created has not proven acceptable as it places the reigns of the Mauryan Emperors Candragupta and Aśoka more than sixty years too early. However, the general account they provide has been reconciled with other data, mainly from the *Purāṇas*, to create a widely accepted chronological framework for the history of India during this period. For our purposes, the essential points of this account are that the accession of Aśoka occurs in 218 BE and all eighteen schools were already in existence by 200 BE.[6] This we will call the 'long chronology', to use a convenient term of Lamotte's.[7]

A number of works of Sarvāstivādin origin (and later works influenced by them) date the accession of Aśoka to 100 BE. In fact it seems clear that during the early centuries AD the Vaibhāṣika commentators attempted to create a chronological framework for the early history, probably using a version of the Aśoka legend as their starting point. Of course, many of the Sanskrit texts simply give isolated statements, which could not be called a chronology. However, we do possess a work on the doctrines of the eighteen schools which does go some way towards achieving a unified framework. This is a treatise attributed to Vasumitra, extant in three Chinese and one Tibetan translation. In fact the verses naming the author as the 'bodhisattva Vasumitra' are absent from the earliest Chinese translation (beginning of the fifth century AD) and were clearly added in India at a later date. The first translation would hardly have failed to mention his name, if its attribution to one of the famous figures of Sarvāstivādin history bearing the name of Vasumitra had been known at the time. Probably it is a work of the third or fourth centuries AD. For our purposes the essential points to note are that for Pseudo-Vasumitra divisions begin during the reign of Aśoka in the second century BE.[8] By the end of the second century the Mahāsāṅghikas had eight new branches but the Sthaviras were still undivided. During the course of the third century BE nine new branches of the Sthaviras emerge and the Sautrāntikas arrive in the fourth century BE. This we will call the 'short chronology'.

The difference between the two chronologies is rather considerable. According to the long chronology all eighteen schools existed eighteen years before the accession of Aśoka. According to the short chronology divisions among the Sthaviras do not begin until 100 years after the accession of Aśoka. We do not know whether other major schools than the Theravādins and the Sarvāstivādins had created their own chronologies. The *Śāriputraparipṛcchā*, a Mahāsāṅghika work translated into Chinese between AD 317 and 420, follows more or less the same chronology as Pseudo-Vasumitra.[9] Bhavya preserves various traditions which may be old, but it seems dangerous to rely on material only collected as late as the sixth century AD.

A number of scholars have expressed doubts as to whether we can still accept a version of the long chronology as authoritative.[10] At present it does not seem possible to decide the question. Here only a few of the relevant issues can be addressed, since our concern is to examine the nature of the earliest divisions in the Buddhist community and of the earliest schools of thought. However, some points cannot be avoided entirely. One of our earliest sources relates the first schism of all to the second communal recitation — usually known as the Council of Vaiśāli.

2. The Council of Vaiśāli

An account of the first two communal recitations is contained in all surviving recensions of the *Vinayapiṭaka*. We possess one version in Pāli, parts of two in

Sanskrit, one in Tibetan and five in Chinese. There is also a summary of the *Vinaya* of the Haimavata school in Chinese.[11] This material has been conveniently collected in French by Hofinger.[12]

The date of the events described is given as 100 BE in the Pāli *Vinaya* and in the *Vinayas* of the Mahīśāsakas, Dharmaguptakas and Haimavatas. These schools are closely related as regards their *Vinayas*.[13] The *Vinayas* of the Sarvāstivādins and Mūlasarvāstivādins give the date as 110 BE. No doubt this divergence is due to a wish to reconcile the account of the second communal recitation with the tradition found in Sarvāstivādin works that the accession of Aśoka took place in 100 BE.[14] The rather brief account in the Mahāsāṅghika *Vinaya* gives no date at all. In any case it seems likely that the figure of 100 years was known in the last centuries BC, whether or not it is original. This would still be far earlier than most of our historical information for the early period.

One hundred years is a round figure, and was almost certainly not intended as an exact count of years. It is more interesting to examine the accounts of the event to see what they tell us as to its likely dating. What is immediately striking is the paucity of claims to direct connection with Buddha.[15] Yet even as late as 60 BE there would have been monks in their eighties who would have received *upasampadā* in the lifetime of the Buddha (even perhaps some in their seventies who were novices at a young age). Given the emphasis upon seniority in the *saṅgha*, such monks would have played a major role (ceremonially even if not in fact) and their connection with the Buddha would have been mentioned in all extant accounts. They are not mentioned. We can assume therefore that the second communal recitation did not take place much before about 70 BE.

On the other hand every account we have emphasizes the connection with Ānanda (except the Mahāsāṅghika).[16] The very brief Mahāsāṅghika account is however one of the few to claim a direct relationship with the Buddha. At the very least it seems likely that in the original version the presiding monk (very probably the oldest living monk)[17] was specifically claimed to have been a pupil of Ānanda. No early tradition survives as to the date of the death of Ānanda, but it seems reasonable to suppose that he might have lived until around 20 BE.[18] In this kind of context being a pupil of Ānanda does not necessarily involve a long period of contact. In his old age Ānanda would no doubt have been the head of a large group of monks and even the pupils of his pupils would have had Ānanda as their nominal teacher so long as Ānanda was still alive.

At the traditional date (taken literally) of 100 BE it would just about be possible for the most senior monk alive to be reckoned a pupil of Ānanda — he would have to be an active centenarian. A date ten or so years earlier would be more likely. In the form in which we have the tradition, however, it is quite impossible — a whole group of active centenarians is not believable! A group of active octogenarians is certainly possible — we are after all dealing with a group of elders selected precisely because of their age.[19]

What emerges from this is that a date of around 70–80 BE is implied by the

accounts as we have them.[20] Two further points should be noted. Firstly, the early traditions do not mention the name of the king, presumably because it was of no interest and because he played no special role in these events. Secondly, all the early accounts (including that of the Mahāsāṅghikas) leave us to understand that the decisions taken were accepted by all parties.

3. The first schism

The earliest accounts we have of the first schism in the Buddhist order are quite late. Even by the short chronology we are speaking of sources between four and six centuries subsequent to the event. By the long chronology we could be dealing with sources no earlier than eight centuries after. The earliest source is possibly the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, which is posterior to Kaniṣka in date.[21] However, the relevant passage is absent from the earliest translation into Chinese of this work.[22] It could therefore be a later addition made in India. This account claims that the first schism was the result of doctrinal controversies over the 'Five Points' advanced by a monk named Mahādeva.[23] Let us note that Mahādeva is not named *in this context* in any other early source and is therefore not certainly named before the fifth century AD — nearly a thousand years later (by the long chronology)!

Pseudo-Vasumitra, also a Sarvāstivādin source, likewise attributes the schism to doctrinal disputes over 'Five Points'. The earliest Chinese translation refers to three monks named Nāga, Pratyaya (?) and Bahuśruta. The Tibetan translation is similar. The two later Chinese translations refer to four groups of monks.[24] This is clearly related to a later passage from a work attributed to Bhavya (sixth or seventh century) which attributes the schism to a worthy monk (unnamed or named Bhadraka), subsequently supported by two learned (*bahuśruta*) Elders named Nāga(sena) and Sthiramati (according to Bu-ston Valguka).[25] Tāranātha infers from the contents of the subsequent list of the propositions attributed to the different schools that this is a tradition of the Sammitīya school.

The same source (quoted by Bhavya) dates these events to 137 BE under the kings Nanda and Mahāpadma and mentions that the work of the Elder Vātsīputra took place in 200 BE. This date for the origins of the Pudgalavāda is too late in terms of the long chronology, but reasonably compatible with the short chronology which dates the beginning of divisions among the Sthaviras to 200 BE. The first date is more in line with the long chronology. Probably the Sammitīyas had their own chronology.

By contrast the Sinhalese tradition knows nothing of a doctrinal cause for the first schism. The oldest source is the *Dīpavaṃsa* which probably dates from immediately after the reign of Mahāsena when its account ends. This would be early fourth century AD.[26] It traces the origin of the schism to the defeated party at the second communal recitation and is followed in this by later Sinhalese chronicles.[27] Noticeably, however, Buddhaghosa does not give an account of the origin of the eighteen schools in the *Samantapāsādikā*. The commentary to the

Kathāvatthu does.[28] Its account is closely related to that in the *Mahāvaṃsa*, but also quotes the *Dīpavaṃsa* in full. This strongly suggests that no account of the 'eighteen schools' was preserved in the commentarial tradition of the *Mahāvihāra*.

This can also be inferred from the *Dīpavaṃsa*. The first part of Chapter V is given a separate title *Ācariyavāda*. It contains the account of the schools preceded by an account of the first two communal recitations or *dhamma* recensions (*saṃgaha*). Since Chapter IV had already given an account of these it is obvious that the *Dīpavaṃsa* is drawing on a second older source, presumably in Sinhala Prakrit. We can go further than this. That older source has clearly taken a list of schools of northern origin and added to it an introduction giving an account of the two communal recitations based on the Mahāvihāra commentarial tradition. That it is a list of northern origin emerges clearly from its close relation to the lists given by Pseudo-Vasumitra and the *Śāriputraparipṛcchā*.[29] In fact it is possible to infer that it derives from a Sarvāstivādin original, probably mediated by a Mahīśāsaka source.

The reason this can be inferred is that the first schism in the Theravāda is attributed to the Mahīśāsakas from whom the other divisions descend. This is the position where one would expect the Sarvāstivādins who are found conversely in the position where one would expect the Mahīśāsakas (i.e. in close connection with the Dharmaguptakas). The list gives details of minor Sarvāstivādin branches such as the Suttavādins and clearly lacked information on the later Mahāsāṅghika schools of Amarāvati and Nāgārjunikoṇḍa. On the other hand the Sinhalese were well aware of the Andhakas. Their views are often referred to in the commentary to the *Kathāvatthu*. There is inscriptional evidence of the presence of the Sinhalese school at Nāgārjunikoṇḍa in the third century AD.[30] One of Buddhaghosa's sources is an *Andhakaṭṭhakathā*.[31]

In these circumstances it is easy to understand why the list of schools given in *Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā* does not relate very well to the attributions given in the body of that very text. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Ceylon texts add a further list of six Indian schools.[32] These do relate to the *Kathāvatthu* and are obviously based upon the Mahāvihāra commentary to that work. We may note the mention of schools such as the Rājagirikas and the Siddhathikas, hardly mentioned in Indian literature but known from inscriptions at Amarāvati. Even more suggestive is the presence of the otherwise unknown Vājiriyas.[33] It is not then surprising that *Kathāvatthu* Commentary often feels the need to add the word *etarahi* 'nowadays' when it attributes particular views to particular schools.[34]

Like the Ceylon tradition, the eclectic *Sāriputraparipṛccchā* gives a list of the eighteen schools of northern origin. It too knows nothing of a first schism due to discussion of doctrinal points. Neither, however, does it describe the origin of the Mahāsāṅghikas as deriving from the defeated party at the second communal recitation. Rather it sees the Mahāsāṅghikas as the conservative party which has preserved the original *Vinaya* unchanged against reformist efforts to create a reorganized and stricter version.[35] Like the *Dīpavaṃsa* it sees the origin of the

name partly in a council where the Mahāsāṅghikas were in the majority and their opponents included many senior monks. This must however be largely a myth based upon a folk etymology. Clearly the Mahāsāṅghikas are in fact a school claiming to follow the *Vinaya* of the original, undivided *saṅgha*, i.e. the *mahāsaṅgha*. Similarly the *theravāda* is simply the traditional teaching, i.e. the original teaching before it came to be divided into schools of thought.[36] The *Dīpavaṃsa* makes this clear when it explicitly identifies the term *theravāda* with the term *aggavāda* in the sense of primal teaching.[37]

We have then two accounts of the origins of the first schism. The first is of Sarvāstivādin origin. Known from two sources of around the third and fourth centuries AD and in many later sources based on these, it attributes the origin to doctrinal disputes over the 'Five Points'. The second is of Theravādin and Mahāsāṅghika origin. Known from two sources of around the third and fourth centuries AD, and in many later sources based on these, it attributes the origin to *Vinaya* issues. It is obviously important to examine carefully the evidence for the content of the doctrinal disputes. As we shall see, it is very much earlier in date than the evidence for the 'eighteen schools'.

4. The 'Five Points'

The most detailed account we have of the 'Five Points' is contained in a canonical Pāli text, the *Kathāvatthu*. Traditionally this work is attributed to Moggaliputta Tissa in the reign of Aśoka, i.e. the latter part of the third century BC. Although some scholars have supported the traditional view, it is in fact clear that it is not a unitary work in the form in which we have it.[38]

If the authenticity of the Ceylon tradition that the Canon was closed in the first century BC is accepted, then even the latest portions would not be subsequent to the first century BC. This cannot in any case be far wrong. The *Kathāvatthu* on the one hand contains arguments against some Mahāyānist or proto-Mahāyānist notions and on the other clearly does not know the developed Mahāyāna. A good example would be the assertion in one of the final sections of the *Kathāvatthu* that Buddhas stand in all directions.[39] The supporter of this view denies that they are in any of the recognized heaven realms but is not able to name any such Buddhas when challenged to do so. Such an argument would not have been possible once the developed Mahāyāna literature was known.

We can in any case be certain of an early date for the oldest portions of the *Kathāvatthu*. The first *vagga* (known as the *mahāvagga*) discusses mainly but not exclusively the views of the 'person' and of *sabbam atthi* 'all exists'; it contains a number of anomalous linguistic forms.[40] These are not quite absent in the remaining *vaggas* but relatively few. Norman has convincingly established that these cannot be due to influence from Sinhala Prakrit but must be of North Indian origin.[41] He has also suggested that there was originally a dialect difference between the two speakers in the framework of the *puggalakathā* (the first portion of the first *vagga*).

This gains support from the fact that a canonical Sarvāstivādin *abhidharma* work, the *Vijñānakāya*, devotes its first two chapters to defending the doctrine of *sarvam asti* and criticizing the notion of the *pudgala* — the same two topics that we find in the *mahāvagga* but in reverse order.[42] In the first chapter the opponent of *sarvam asti* is named as Maudgalyāyana (Mou-lien). As was pointed out by La Vallée Poussin, this must refer to Moggaliputta Tissa, the author of the *Kathāvatthu*.[43] The earliest portion of the *Kathāvatthu* is then likely to date from the third century BC or very soon thereafter.

It is worth noting at this point that this suggests a three-way split. Party A would oppose both the *puggala* and *sabbam atthi*. Led by Moggaliputta they would be Vibhajyavādins and ancestors of the Ceylon tradition among others. Party B espouses *sarvam asti* and opposes the doctrine of the 'person', preferring its own teaching referred to by the *Vijñānakāya* as *śūnyatāvāda*. They would be the ancestors of the Sarvāstivāda. Party C would be the Pudgalavādins who presumably rejected the doctrine of *sarvam asti*. This three-way split gains some support from a Pāli commentarial passage which treats *puggalavāda* and *suññatavāda* as extremes to be avoided.[44] In any case it is not clear whether these were yet distinct fraternities (*nikāya*) or merely schools of opinion. Nor is it clear what the relationship of these three schools would be to the Mahāsāṅghikas.

The very next section of the *Kathāvatthu* deals precisely with the 'Five Points'.[45] This portion of the text must also be quite early. It seems to represent a genuine debate with a real opponent. The tone of it is still very similar to the *mahāvagga*. It is probably part of the original core of the text. Even if not, it cannot plausibly be dated later than the second century BC.

It is a matter of some surprise that most scholars have in fact given more weight to much later accounts than to the actual content of the *Kathāvatthu* itself. Let us note that by the short chronology the relevant portions of the text would be close in time to the original disputes. Even by the long chronology they would only be a century or so later. This contrasts sharply with sources belonging to the commentarial period some five centuries later. Moreover, such sources mostly represent a genre of literature which handed down supposed views of different schools in short statements. Out of context in this way they are subject to error and reinterpretation. In some instances it is quite clear that this has been the case. Such works do not constitute a good source for the understanding of controversial points. Wherever possible, these must be understood in their original context, that is to say in the actual *abhidhamma* literature itself.

It is by no means clear that most of the views we are given as sectarian views were ever the positions of clearly defined schools. Many of them are surely constructed dilemmas, intended as debating points to sharpen understanding of the issues. They could never have been the cause of serious sectarian division. It is much more probable that they, like much else in the canonical *abhidhamma*, are simply the distant ancestors of the dialectic of the Mādhyamikas.

5. The 'Five Points' in the Kathāvatthu

The thing that stands out most clearly about the treatment of this subject in the *Kathāvatthu* is that it is closely related to the earlier discussion as to whether an arahat can fall away. The same structure is applied to each of the first four points as is applied in the earlier discussion. The parallel is so close that it is difficult to doubt that they are part of one and the same discourse.[46] The view that an arahat can fall away is standard in the Sarvāstivāda and the orthodox Vaibhāṣika position on the subject is recounted at length by Vasubandhu in the *Abhidharmakośa*.[47] The *Kathāvatthu* is clearly criticizing a very similar position, i.e. one in which the arahat, never-returner and once-returner can fall away, but the stream-enterer cannot. The opponent in the *Kathāvatthu* and the Vaibhāṣika both support their case by reference to the obscure distinction between the *samayavimutta* and the *asamayavimutta*.

The context in which we should see the 'Five Points' is then that of the *abhidhamma* debates which refine the interpretation of some of the more recondite points of *suttanta* teaching. We shall see that such a context gives little support to notions which see the 'Five Points' as involving some kind of downgrading of the arahat as against a Buddha. This is not the issue. If there is a downgrading, it is rather a devaluing of the arahat who has not developed the *abhiññā*.

6. The arahat has doubt

The simplest of the 'Five Points' to understand is certainly the proposition that the arahat has doubt. The first thing to notice is how remarkable this proposition is. It is a frequent declaration of the *suttanta* literature that the stream-enterer has overcome doubt. So basic is this notion that the statement that an arahat has doubt must be intended to startle. In fact when the argument is examined in detail it is clear that it has been carefully constructed in order to generate a challenging proposition.

In the first place, the word used for doubt is *kaṅkhā*. Now this is just slightly less specialized in its usage in the earlier literature than the more technical *vicikicchā*. It is immediately agreed by both parties that the arahat does not have either *vicikicchā* or *kaṅkhā* in the technical sense of doubt as to Teacher, Dhamma, Saṅgha, etc. It is equally agreed by both parties that an arahat may be in doubt as to name and family, as to right and wrong roads and as to ownership of grass, wood and trees, but cannot be in doubt as to the four fruitions (*phala*). In this restricted sense the proposition cannot really be disputed; so an initially counter-intuitive thesis achieves the aim of both stimulating the hearer and sharpening the understanding. Clearly all that is at issue is at most a terminological question, if that. It is significant that the *Satyasiddhiśāstra* gives a parallel account of the nature of doubt.[48]

Of special interest is the distinction made between an arahat skilled in his

own *dhamma* (*sadhammakusala*) and an arahat skilled in *paradhamma*. Only the latter is free from doubt in both senses. The commentary is probably right to equate this to the distinction between *paññāvimutta* and *ubhatobhāgavimutta*. In this context that is equivalent to the distinction between an arahat without higher knowledges (*abhiññā*) and one who has developed such abilities. Interestingly this is not a standard term in the Pāli *abhidhamma* and appears to be drawn from the terminology of the opponent.

7. The arahat has ignorance

Hardly less surprising is the proposition that an arahat has ignorance. Here again a slightly less specific term — *aññāṇa* is used for ignorance rather than the more usual technical term — *avijjā*, but the conclusions are practically identical. In fact the whole course of the discussion is on the same lines as in the case of doubt.

A number of scholars have followed the *Mahāvibhāṣā* in interpreting this as referring to unafflicted (*akliṣṭa*) ignorance.[49] It is perhaps worth noting that this, if correct; would situate the discussion very much in the context of the Sarvāstivādin tradition. Such a terminology is absent from the Pāli *abhidhamma* literature. Of course the substantial point is very similar. However, the *Jñānaprasthāna* appears to have understood that an arahat could be ignorant as to his own liberation.[50]

8. Paravitāraṇā

This is the fourth proposition in all the extant lists. *Paravitāraṇā*[51] can mean:

A. induction of comprehension by others;
B. induction of investigation by others;
C. being made to overcome by others;
D. being made to complete by others.[52]

One suspects that a deliberate wordplay of the kind so frequent in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* is intended.[53] The *Kathāvatthu* seems to take it in the first two senses. The context[54] suggests sense C which recalls the notion of *kaṅkhāvitaraṇa* 'overcoming doubt'.[55] It is clear that the variations in the translations of Pseudo-Vasumitra, etc. are simply the different options. The *Jñānaprasthāna* probably had the same term as the *Kathāvatthu*.[56]

Again we have a superficially startling notion. The whole point of being an arahat is to have an independent knowledge of truth such that no assistance would be required from others. Note that this is the first point raised in the *Kathāvatthu* and the opponent immediately concedes that an arahat is not dependent on another and does not lack wisdom in the sense of knowledge of the Buddhist path.

In fact each of the four senses given above requires *abhidhamma* analysis. Sense A is true if what is meant is comprehension of mundane information. It is false if what is meant is the liberating knowledge. Sense B is false if what is meant is the arousing of insight since the arahat must have active wisdom at the time of realization. It would be possible, however, to argue that someone might attain arahatship, but not label their experience: 'this is arahatship'. If the question were raised, they would be able to identify it.[57] It is also possible to argue that not all *ariyas* would have the relevant reviewing knowledge.[58] Indeed this would be generally agreed for stream-enterers (cf. the story of Mahānāma); some would only be able to identify themselves as stream-enterers after being told the relevant criteria and investigating to establish the absence of doubt, etc.

Sense C, however, implies the existence of arahats who can only overcome defilements after a stimulus from someone else and sense D implies arahats who can only complete the path, etc. after such a stimulus. The need for such a stimulus (*parato ghoso*) is of course standard for stream-enterers and reasonably widely exemplified for arahats.[59] It would, however, be felt in the Theravādin *abhidhamma* and other *ekâbhisamaya* schools that the individual concerned was not yet an arahat — he would perhaps have experienced the ordinary (*lokiya*) path of arahatship but not yet the transcendent (*lokuttara*) path. Such a view would be more appropriate to an early version of the gradualism of the Sarvāstivāda.[60]

It is perhaps significant that the final point made in the *Kathāvatthu* is an acknowledgement that arahats are not made to comprehend the (fruit of) arahatship by others. La Vallée Poussin[61] is misleading here. The opponent *accepts* this point. No-one is arguing that an arahat can be mistaken as to his fruition. This possibly implies a school in which experience of *magga* is not necessarily immediately followed by the *phala*. Again, I suggest, an early version of *anupūrvâbhisamaya*.[62]

In the seminal article in which he identified the 'Five Points' in the *Kathāvatthu*, La Vallée Poussin offers three possible translations of 'Points' 2–4. The third, which he considers, to be "probably (?) the original meaning of Mahādeva", is: "being ignorant and subject to doubt, an arhat ought to receive instruction". To my mind, this is unfortunate. La Vallée Poussin's article has been extremely influential and widely followed — in particular in his view that the "general import seems to be a strong depreciation of the arahats". In fact the other two translations which he offers are more to the point. The first refers simply to acquiring mundane information while the second is the case of an arahat unaware of his arahatship who "gets certitude from the asseveration of another".

What we have here is a constructed dilemma which clarifies the distinction between the knowledge of *dhamma* which every arahat must have and the more mundane knowledges of name and family, etc. which are only known to some arahats. There is no depreciation of arahats as such, here. At most it is only arahats without higher attainments and higher knowledges who are being

(slightly) depreciated. Why then did La Vallée Poussin think there was? Partly it must be because of relying on the accounts associated with the name of Mahādeva — accounts which we now know to be late and probably subsequent to the period of conflict between Mahāyāna and the early schools which seems to have occurred around the third century AD.[63] Even more important was his interpretation of the first of the 'Five Points' to which we must now turn.

9. Parûpahāra

Unusually there are two terms given for the first 'Point' in the *Kathāvatthu*. In the *uddāna* we find *parûpahāra*. This, in isolation rather cryptic expression, is found also in Pseudo-Vasumitra. Demiéville[64] points out that the different Chinese translations must derive from different interpretations of the term.[65] The earliest translation and also the Tibetan translation interpret it in the sense of 'providing'. Bhavya clearly had the same word but the Tibetan translators appear to have resolved the compound as 'providing for another' instead of being 'provision by another'.[66] Unfortunately both Lamotte and Bareau have chosen to follow Hsüantsang and translate this point as "the arahat can be seduced by others".[67]

In the body of the text of the *Kathāvatthu* the proposition is put at first as "an arahat has emission of impure seminal fluid". Demiéville renders the *Jñānaprasthāna* version as: "Il y a chez l'Arhat, molesté par le dieu Māra, émission d'impureté". Just as with the other 'Points' the proposition is very startling. The question of the emission of semen is extremely important in the *Vinaya* literature and hence in the practical life of the *bhikkhu*. It is discussed there not infrequently and the emphatic statement in the *Mahāvagga*[68] that it cannot occur that an arahat's semen would be released would have been well-known.

La Vallée Poussin suggested that the notion here is that of a succubus. The *Kathāvatthu* refers to the opponent's claim that divinities of the Māra class (*Mārakāyikā devatā*) bring about the arahat's emission of seminal impurity. The *Jñānaprasthāna* also attributes this to the activity of Māra. According to Paramārtha, Mahādeva claimed that all bodily outflows (tears, phlegm, etc.) in an arahat are the work of Māra.[69] The same source attributed to Mahādeva a *sūtra* in which occurs the statement: "Le roi Māra et ses femmes divines, afin de faire déchoir *l'aśaikṣa*, souillent d'impureté son vêtement . . .". What is important to note is that no source claims that this could occur as a result of a dream. Of course it is suggested that a dream occurred in the case of Mahādeva, but this is precisely because he is, according to the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, a false arahat. Arahats do not dream.

The key to the interpretation of this passage lies in the presentation of the opponent's argument at the end.[70] The *Kathāvatthu* often allows the opponent to make a telling point near the end of the discussion. Here the point made is that others may provide (*upasaṃhareyyuṃ*) the five requisites; therefore there is *parūpahāra* for an arahat. This is textually slightly clumsy as it stands. The

reason is clear. In the 'Five Points' as they originally stood what was asserted was the proposition that an arahat can be provided (with material things) by others. This is obviously closely analogous to the provision of mundane information as envisaged in the following 'Points'. As we have seen, it is precisely this original proposition which is preserved by Pseudo-Vasumitra and Bhavya, undoubtedly because it was enshrined in a verse.[71]

The *Kathāvatthu* and *Jñānaprasthāna* have focussed on what they see as the weak point in the opponent's argument in a kind of *reductio*. One may guess that there really was a *sūtra* in which Māra was depicted as doing some such thing. This would not be so far out of line with some of the other things Māra is shown as doing in the Canon. The logic is after all clear: deities can provide the requisites for monks.[72] If supernatural beings can create food and robes for arahats, then they can create other things. If so, Māras can create undesirable things. We have a *sutta* to support this.

It is interesting to see how the *Kathāvatthu* seeks to oppose the point. Initially it establishes agreement that arahats do not have passionate attachment (*rāga*) and implies that seminal emission is appropriate only for those who do. Then it seeks to establish the origin of the seminal fluid produced by deities of the Māra class. The opponent agrees that it is not from those deities nor the arahat's own nor from other people. Deities and arahats do not have seminal emissions in the ordinary way. If from other people, how does it get into the body? The opponent agrees that it is not provided through the pores of the body. This rules out either a source from other human beings or a creation by those deities outside the body.

The question is then asked why these deities do this, and we learn that it is in order to produce doubt (*vimati*). It is established that this is not doubt in the Teacher, etc. Presumably, then, it is some kind of mundane doubt. This topic is then left — presumably because it will be taken up in discussion of the subsequent 'Points'. Then we return to the question of the origin of the seminal fluid. The point to note is that Māras are Paranimmitavasavattin deities — they have power over the creations of others, they do not merely create. The opponent is clearly working on the basis of traditional Indian medicine in which seminal fluid (*sukka*) is one of the seven elements beginning with chyle (*rasa*) into which food is successively transformed. The objection is raised that not all who eat have emissions of seminal fluid (e.g. boys, eunuchs and deities). It is also objected that the case of excretion is not analogous, since there is no reservoir (*āsaya*) for seminal fluid as there is for digested food.[73]

All this seems a little out of harmony with the next section which is an *abhidhamma* style 'circulating discourse'. First it is established that an arahat has completely and utterly made an end of passionate attachment. Then the same is established for each of the other nine *kilesas*. Next it is established that the path has been brought into being in order to abandon passionate attachment (*rāgappahānāya maggo bhāvito*). The same is then established one by one for each of the other six sets which make up the *bodhipakkhiyadhammas*. This whole

process is then gone through one by one for each of the other nine *kilesas* (which include both delusion and doubt). A fine mnemonic chant! What is its purpose? The answer must be, to emphasize the thoroughness with which an arahat has accomplished his task in order to counter the suggestion that an arahat may fall away.

What follows is a quotation emphasizing the qualities of the arahat. Then comes the distinction between the two kinds of arahat. Then the whole process involving the ten *kilesas* and the seven sets applied to each of the ten is applied to the two arahats. In fact a *catuṣkoṭi* is employed in each case to point out the oddity of the proposition. It is this circulating discourse which recurs for the next three 'Points' and is found in very similar form in the earlier discussion of an arahat's falling away.

10. The original form of the 'Five Points'

Analysis of the *Kathāvatthu* gives, then, clear evidence of a historical development in the materials from which it is composed. We can divide this into three phases.

Phase One is the development of a literature consisting of constructed dilemmas. Of course, some of these were probably very old but a fashion, as it were, for them would be associated with the rise of *abhidhamma*. They would not really be a radical departure of any kind, just a stimulating formulation for purposes of clarification. It is material of this sort which has been used as the basis for many of the *kathāvatthūni* 'points for discussion'. No doubt, too, they continued to be composed.

Phase Two would be slightly later than, but overlapping with, *Phase One*. This would be the period of the three-way doctrinal discussions between Pudgalavādins, Sarvāstivādins and Vibhajyavādins. It is just these three schools for whom we have a coherent doctrinal structure emerging from the early period *and no others*.[74] In this period, however, we must certainly think in terms of schools of thought rather than separate, organized sects. In the *Kathāvatthu* this would be evidenced by the *Puggalakathā* and the sections in the early chapters dealing with the Sarvāstivāda.[75]

The original version of the 'Five Points', if it was originally a set of five, would be:

a. provision by others (*parūpahāra*)
b. lack of knowledge (*aññāṇa*)
c. uncertainty (*kaṅkhā*)
d. induction of comprehension/investigation by others (*paravitāraṇā*)
e. the arahat falls away (*parihāyati arahā*).[76]

This would be a mnemonic for the following argument. There are certain individuals who attain a temporary liberation. They require an external stimulus.

How do we know that arahats of any kind may require external aid? It is agreed that they can receive material aid from others. Equally they can be in doubt as to the correct road to take on a journey and can lack knowledge of mundane things. In such cases they require external information if they do not have psychic powers. Similarly certain individuals can momentarily achieve arahatship but external confirmation or an external stimulus to stabilize their achievement is required if they do not have sufficient concentration.

Phase Three in the development of the *Kathāvatthu* would represent a subsequent reshaping in a changed historical situation. The northern Sarvāstivādin tradition has receded from awareness. Its centres in Kashmir, Gandhāra and Mathurā are far away. Contact now is with the Mahāsāṅghika traditions further south. It is to this period that we should attribute the work of Mahādeva. Pseudo-Vasumitra describes the origin of three schools as due to the work of Mahādeva.[77] The *Śāriputraparipṛcchā* refers to the 'school of Mahādeva' in the same context.[78] It is with the same group of schools that the *Kathāvatthu* Commentary associates the 'Five Points'. These and later schools are grouped by the *Kathāvatthu* Commentary under the name of Andhaka and it is precisely in inscriptions from Amarāvati and Nāgārjunikoṇḍa that we meet them.

According to the earliest translation of Pseudo-Vasumiṭra we should date this Mahādeva's work to the period before 200 BE. This is a short chronology work; so it must refer to a date about one hundred years after the accession of Aśoka, i.e. the early second century BC. Since Pāli sources also imply a date after the reign of Aśoka, it is probably safe to date the formation of these later Mahāsāṅghika schools to the second century BC.[79] What I wish to argue is that the *Kathāvatthu* was expanded and reshaped precisely at this time in response to ideas coming from these schools. In fact the commentary attributes the bulk of the views in the *Kathāvatthu* either to the schools it calls Andhakas or to the Uttarāpathakas. This must be a recollection of the situation at an earlier date. Probably many views originally of Sarvāstivādin origin have been transferred to the more familiar Andhakas.[80] The term 'Andhaka' itself is a reflection of Śātavāhana times.

Mahādẹva would then have taken up the 'Five Points' and reformulated them for his own purposes. It is this reformulation which is evidenced in the *Kathāvatthu*. Probably it is at this stage that the first 'Point' was transformed from a simple statement that arahats can receive material aid from divinities to a claim that (some?) arahats are subject to physical interference by divinities of the Māra class. Very possibly the subsequent points were also reinterpreted in a stronger sense. What then of the fifth 'Point'?

11. The fifth 'Point'

The early Mahāsāṅghikas appear to have rejected the idea that an arahat could fall away.[81] This must be the reason why Mahādeva has changed the fifth 'Point'. It might have seemed natural simply to transfer it to the stream-enterer,

but this has not been done explicitly. Instead, other questions related to stream-entry have been taken up, which could approach the same question more obliquely.

The second *vagga* of the *Kathāvatthu* preserves two items. In fifth place we have the proposition that there could be verbal utterance (*vacībheda*) on the part of someone in a meditative attainment (*samāpannassa*), while in sixth place we have another statement in cryptic form: *dukkhâhāro maggaṅgaṃ*.[82] Within the text of the first item we have the question: "When knowing 'suffering', does one utter the word 'suffering'?", while in the text of the second is the question: "Do all those who utter the word 'suffering' bring into being (*bhāventi*) the path?"

Bhavya has the same two items, but in reverse order, in his account of the views of the Ekavyavahārikas.[83] It is the second item which corresponds with the fifth 'Point' of the Sanskrit sources.[84] It is suitably ambiguous. At first sight it could easily be taken to mean: "the nutriment of suffering is a factor of the path" — a rather unexpected notion.[85] It could mean "evoking [knowledge of] suffering is the cause of the path", but this would not be at all controversial. What must be in fact intended is: "pronouncing [the word] 'suffering' is the cause of the path" or it could be ". . . is a sign of the path".[86]

Paramārtha and his interpreters preserve two explanations.[87] One is that repeating a verse can provide the stimulus required to arouse the path of stream-entry as in the case of Sāriputta. The point here seems to be that attainment of stream-entry normally requires some form of teaching from the Buddha or a disciple.[88] The second explanation, derived from the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, is that the deliberate repetition of the word 'suffering' can act as the necessary impulse to arouse that path. By themselves such explanations seem fairly straightforward. What does the *Kathāvatthu* have to say?

The first thing to notice is that there are an additional three related topics. The question as to whether one can hear sounds while in an attainment[89] is closely related both conceptually and in literary form to the question as to whether one can make utterances. Similarly the question[90] as to whether the knowledge "this is suffering" occurs for one uttering the words "this is suffering" is clearly another formulation of the same issues. More interesting than either of these is a third point, which emerges when the literary form of the discussion of *dukkhāhāro maggaṅgaṃ* is examined.

The treatment of this topic is brief, but the identical form is repeated later in the second *vagga*.[91] The immediate question is: "Do all those who hear the utterance (*vohāra*) of Lord Buddha bring into being the path?" This is part of the larger question as to whether the utterance of the Lord Buddha is transcendent (*lokuttara*). This is important and must be examined, but for now it is sufficient to note that the issue in this topic is partly the question of momentariness. Can different things go on at the same time or do they occur in a rapid, sequential process? That of course is precisely the question of *suttanta* versus *abhidhamma*.

This is the hallmark of the *Kathāvatthu's* treatment of many of the views

which later tradition associates with the Mahāsāṅghikas. They are again and again criticized for over-generalizing, for lack of precision or for excessive enthusiasm.[92] Of course, the criticism is usually in the form of asking questions rather than overt criticism but it is no less real for that. This is what one would expect of the views current among them were *suttanta* formulations lacking in *abhidhamma* exactitude — a rather conservative doctrinal approach. In this context it is interesting to notice that the *Vinaya* of the Mahāsāṅghikas seems to define *abhidharma* as the ninefold *sūtrānta*.[93] This suggests that the early Mahāsāṅghikas (or some of them) may have rejected the *abhidharma* developments.

12. Mahāsāṅghika origins

If the 'Five Points' and Mahādeva were not involved in the First Schism, then we are left with *vinaya* issues as the cause. It has been realized for some time that it is unlikely that the Mahāsāṅghikas are directly descended from the defeated party at the second communal recitation.[94] They would hardly give a favourable account of their own defeat! It is of course quite possible that they, or some of them, originated in the same geographical area as the Vajjiputtakas and were associated with them in the minds of their opponents.

Human nature being what it is, it is perfectly credible that the Mahāsāṅghikas believed that they had preserved the original form of the *Vinaya* which had been altered by others. Their opponents are unlikely to have agreed. They probably felt that things had become lax and it was necessary to restore the pristine teaching. In such a dispute historians should not take sides.[95] We may be sure that each party was able to make a case for its position.

What is important is that the picture which now emerges[96] is one in which the earliest division of the *saṅgha* was primarily a matter of monastic discipline. The Mahāsāṅghikas were essentially a conservative party resisting a reformist attempt to tighten discipline. The likelihood is that they were initially the larger body, representing the mass of the community, the *mahāsaṅgha*. Subsequently, doctrinal disputes arose among the reformists as they grew in numbers and gathered support. Eventually these led to divisions on the basis of doctrine. For a very long time, however, there must have been many fraternities (*nikāyas*) based only on minor *vinaya* differences. They would have been very much an internal affair of the *saṅgha* and the laity would have been hardly aware of them. Geographical differences and personalities would have been more important than doctrine.

What then of the early schools within the Mahāsāṅghikas? According to the Sammitīya tradition preserved by Bhavya the Mahāsāṅghikas divided into two schools, at a point subsequent to the origination of the Pudgalavāda.[97] The *Dīpavaṃsa* and other Pāli sources mention the same two schools as the first division of the Mahāsāṅghikas. The two schools concerned are the Kaukkuṭikas and the Ekavyavahārikas. A few sources connected with the North West

mention a third: the Lokottaravādins. This may be due to the later prominence of that school in the area of modern Afghanistan. In fact, however, it seems likely that the Lokottaravādins and the Ekavyavahārikas are two names for the same school.

The Pāli form (Gokulika) and the various translations make it clear that three distinct interpretations of the name of the Kaukkuṭikas were current. The first gives the Pāli form, but is almost certainly an error or popular etymology based on the Middle Indian form. The second interpretation explains it as connected with the Pāli *kukkuḷa* (Skt. *kukūla*) 'a burning ember' or 'a chaff fire'. The only view that the commentary to the *Kathāvatthu* attributes to this school is that "all constructions without exception are burning embers (*kukkuḷa*)". The *Kathāvatthu* criticizes this as an over-generalization.[98] If this is a genuine recollection of the teachings of this school, as its context in the second *vagga* might suggest, then this school could have been promulgating some teachings related to insight meditation.[99] However, this too may well be a popular etymology. Most probably the name Kaukkuṭika originated from the name of the Kukkuṭârāma[100] in Pāṭaliputra — a monastery associated in some sources with the Mahāsāṅghikas. This would be a school centred on that monastery. Possibly the connection became unfamiliar when Pāṭaliputra ceased for a while to be the effective capital of India or after some destruction in that city.[101]

We can, I think, say more about the Ekavyavahārikas. To do so, we must return to the question as to whether the utterance (*vohāra*) of the Lord Buddha is transcendent (*lokuttara*). As we saw, this is closely related to Mahādeva's new version of the fifth 'Point' in the *Kathāvatthu's* treatment. What is also interesting is that it in fact deals with two distinct views. With the first, all utterance on the part of the Buddha is transcendent, just as "Both a heap of corn and a heap of gold can be pointed to with a golden rod".[102] For the second view, the Buddha's utterance is ordinary (*lokiya*) when he makes an utterance about ordinary things, but transcendent when he makes an utterance about transcendent things. The commentary remarks at this point that ". . . this is one view; it is the view nowadays of some Andhakas".

It can then be clearly understood that the Ekavyahārikas or 'One-utterancers' are so called because they held the belief that Buddhas have only one kind of utterance, i.e. a transcendent utterance. Hence too their alternative name of Lokottaravādins "those whose doctrine is transcendent" or "those who affirm the transcendent speaking (of the Buddha)". The Kaukkuṭikas on the other hand must have espoused the alternative proposition that the Buddha had two kinds of speech. This seems very appropriate if we examine the two schools into which the Kaukkuṭikas appear to have divided at an early date.

The commentary does not identify any of the views found in the *Kathāvatthu* as belonging to these schools, but there is some information in later sources. Taking first the school of the Bahuśrutīyas, Pseudo-Vasumitra tells us that they distinguish between the transcendent and the ordinary teaching of the Buddha. The former consists of five words which have the power to lead out of *saṃsāra*:

impermanence, suffering, emptiness, no-self and the peace of *nirvāṇa*. All other words uttered by the Buddha are his ordinary teaching. This is clearly a development of the thesis of those opposed to the 'One-utterancers'. It is not clear how their views differed from those of the second school, the Prajñaptivādins. Their name could refer to some kind of doctrine concerning 'descriptions' or 'concepts', but it is perhaps more likely in the context that it concerned the Buddha's 'making known' of some aspect of the teaching.[103]

The *Dīpavaṃsa* knows only one further school among the Mahāsāṅghikas — the Caitya school. According to the Sammitīya tradition given by Bhavya it is this school which was founded by Mahādeva. It was probably the mother school, based at Amarāvati, of the later schools which the Sinhalese know as the Andhakas.[104] The fuller form of their name means either those with a doctrine about shrines, i.e. *stūpas* or those who honour shrines.[105] The latter is supported by archaeology — the remains at Amarāvati certainly testify to an interest in *stūpa* symbolism. Pseudo-Vasumitra tells us that this school held that honouring *stūpas* does not bring much merit, which would rather support the former interpretation. Perhaps it is also relevant that there is some evidence of deprecation of the *stūpa* cult in certain of the early Mahāyāna *sūtras*.

What then is the significance of Mahādeva's, if Mahādeva it was, alteration of the fifth 'Point'? To understand this, we need to turn to another aspect.

13. The experiential dimension

As it is presented in the *suttanta* literature, the enlightenment experience is the result on the one hand of meditational practice (including devotion and study) and on the other of immediate triggering events. Traditionally, these immediate causes are expressed as the two conditions for the arising of the *ariya* path: teaching of *dhamma* by someone who has already experienced it (*parato ghoso*) and appropriate bringing to mind (*manasikāra*) on the other — the external and internal conditions which combine at an opportune moment. When such a moment arrives, the enlightenment experience can occur quite suddenly.

An individual who has had such an experience and stabilized it is an *ariya*, a person who is genuinely noble as opposed to merely noble by birth. His experience is referred to as transcendent (*lokuttara*) and when, subsequently, he acts or speaks on the basis of that experience, his speech or action are also referred to as transcendent.[106] Presumably the notion is that the experience he has had and continues to have somehow suffuses and transforms his speech. This must obviously be even more true in the case of a Buddha or an arahat.

As a description of how it should appear in practice, this is not controversial for any school of early Buddhism. The problem arises when the attempt is made to give a more exact formulation. This attempt was made in the *abhidhamma* literature. Here the mind is defined as momentary and intentional in nature; a given mental event involves the knowing by a single mind of a single object. The enlightenment experience was defined as the moment in which a

transformed and hence transcendent mind, in association with the mental structuring of the path,[107] takes as its object the element (*dhātu*) which is unconstructed (*asaṅkhata*), i.e. its basis is an experience of an aspect of reality which is uncaused and which does not construct new mental and physical events. Yet this aspect somehow acts as the support for the transformed and newly harmonious balance of mental events.

Obviously the notion of an intentional consciousness experiencing an object which is effectively without boundaries or limits raises some philosophical problems and there are differences between the various *abhidhamma* systems precisely at this point. Fortunately these issues can be disregarded for the present purpose. The important thing to note is that in general the *abhidhamma* systems of the Vibhajyavāda and the Sarvāstivāda do not allow the simultaneous occurrence of different consciousnesses. In the present context this means that the experiences of hearing or speaking or bodily action or experiencing the *dhamma* which does not construct must all involve different objects. Speaking or hearing cannot therefore be transcendent in strict *abhidhamma* terms.

We should not misunderstand this. Seeing and hearing do not occur simultaneously in *abhidhamma* terms. Obviously, however, we seem to experience them as occurring together and in ordinary language we can speak of them as occurring at the same time. In just the same way the experience of the transcendent and sensory activity are not simultaneous. However, we could experience them in alternation as effectively occurring at the same moment. The *suttanta* way of putting things is not wrong from the *abhidhamma* perspective. It is simply that there is a more exact form of expression which is more appropriate for the development of insight.

14. The reformulation of Mahādeva

We can now return to *Phase Three* in the evolution of the *Kathāvatthu's* treatment of the 'Five Points'. There could be no objection to the proposition that repeating the word *dukkha* might sometimes act as the necessary stimulus to enlightenment and it is not obvious why the notion that its utterance might occur spontaneously at such a time would be unacceptable. Nor could the claim that the Buddha's speech was transcendent be rejected as such, especially not if it was limited to his speech on *dhamma* topics. These things can only be objected to from the *abhidhamma* point of view.

Not surprisingly, then, the *Kathāvatthu* rarely criticizes these points as such. Usually it simply attacks them as generalizations. Not everyone who pronounces the word *dukkha* immediately gains enlightenment regardless of their previous behaviour, nor even everyone who has developed insight! Quite often the typical *abhidhamma* emphasis on the impossibility of two simultaneous consciousnesses occurs.[108] What is interesting, however, is the precise position which is being commented on. The opponent is making a very specific claim. The spontaneous utterance of the word 'suffering' occurs only in one case. It does not

occur in ordinary *jhāna*, whether of the form or formless realms. Neither does it occur in an ordinary path attainment (strong insight of the later terminology). Nor does it occur if the path attainment, although transcendent, is higher than the first *jhāna* in level. The commentary even understands that it is restricted to the path of streamentry on the grounds of the denial that it occurs in all cases: However, it would seem difficult to justify this position from the text.

This restriction to the first *jhāna* is very suggestive. It immediately recalls the pure insight worker who achieves the *jhāna* level of concentration only at the moment of stream-entry and perhaps the arahat who is *paññāvimutta*. This places the reformulation of the five 'Points' firmly in the context of the distinction between the arahat skilled in *paradhamma* and the one skilled in his own *dhamma*. Probably then this too is part of Mahādeva's reformulation. There are a number of reasons why this should be so.

Firstly, it seems odd to have a difference between the case of the arahat's falling away and the other four cases. Secondly, it is easy to replace the references to *paradhammakusala*, etc. with those to *asamayavimutta*, etc. but the converse is not possible. Only the question of temporary versus non-temporary liberation is appropriate to the issue as to whether an arahat falls away. This of course explains why the substitution could not take place in that case. Thirdly, as suggested above, this is an unfamiliar terminology. It must come from the opponent. Yet it is not, as far as I am aware, a Sarvāstivādin usage; it may very well, then, be Mahāsāṅghika. Fourthly, it suggests a later period when an emphasis on concern for others as a higher spiritual motivation is beginning to be formulated more specifically. Finally, it seems to be associated with an emphasis on the value of practising the higher *jhānas* and the *abhiññās*. This is perhaps not especially characteristic of the Sarvāstivādins.

It is certainly characteristic of the Yogācārins and it may be suggested that this may be a feature in which they were influenced by the Mahāsāṅghikas. There is some reason to believe that practice of the *jhānas* is of great antiquity[109] and the Mahāsāṅghikas, or this branch of them, may well have been conservative in this respect as well as others. Frauwallner has suggested that the Yogācārins must have taken over many of the non-Sarvāstivādin aspects of the Mahāyānist *abhidharma* system from an earlier system.[110] It would not be very surprising if that source proved to be the Mahāsāṅghikas of central India, an area that seems to have gone over to the Mahāyāna *en masse* at a relatively early date.[111]

The two key features of Asaṅga's *abhidharma* are the acceptance of the possibility of more than one consciousness at a time and the introduction of the notion of the *ālayavijñāna*. The former might very well have been part of Mahādeva's formulation, to judge by the *Kathāvatthu's* criticisms, while the later was attributed by the Yogācārins precisely to earlier concepts of the Sinhalese school and of the Mahāsāṅghikas.[112] It would not be at all unexpected if the Vibhajyavādin concept of the *bhavaṅga* consciousness, already current in the later canonical *Abhidhamma* period, was taken over or shared in some form by their neighbours, the southern Mahāsāṅghikas.

Can we then assess precisely how and why the 'Five Points' were reformulated by Mahādeva? I think the answer is yes. His argument must have run something like this. There are two ways of practising — a selfish one in which you are concerned with getting your own enlightenment as quickly as possible and a more altruistic approach with more concern for others. In the latter case you must develop the *jhānas* and the higher attainments. There are serious snags to the selfish approach. You can be subjected to material assistance, even harassment by Māras. You can lack crucial understanding and have doubt as to your own achievement. You may also lack the information you need to help others. You could well require the aid of others in order to reach your goal or at any rate to finalize it. Because your concentration development is limited, you may need to verbalize your insight meditation in order to stimulate the necessary absorption or to compensate for the absence of teaching by another person when it is required. None of this will be necessary if you develop the *jhānas* in order to become an arahat skilled in *paradhamma*.

Clearly there must have been more to it than this. Obviously the fact that it was felt necessary to reorganize the *Kathāvatthu* treatment of the 'Five Points' indicates at the least that the old formulation had lost relevance, presumably because of the success of Mahādeva's new version. We may guess however that a more substantial development of some kind would be required. Most probably a Mahāsāṅghika (or Andhaka) version of *abhidhamma* had been created on the lines suggested above. Very probably many of its key features are recorded in the *Kathāvatthu*.

It may eventually be possible to reconstruct it but the task is formidable. The attributions of the commentary cannot be trusted without confirmation. The later literature on the schools reflects a later situation when the Mahāsāṅghikas had largely adopted the Mahāyāna. Sarvāstivādin writers may attribute Mahāyānist notions to the Mahāsāṅghikas in order to discredit one or both. Mahāyānist writers of a later date (e.g. Paramārtha) associate the two in order to show the antiquity of the Mahāyāna. Probably most later Mahāsāṅghikas believed that their particular tradition had always been Mahāyānist. It is however clear that the Mahāyāna cannot be this early.[113] That is to say, Mahāyāna as a movement distinct from and opposed to the early schools cannot be. Undoubtedly some of the tendencies which led to the Mahāyāna literature were already extant. To reconstruct the ideas of the early Mahāsāṅghikas we will have to discount this material and draw instead on the *Kathāvatthu* and the early Sarvāstivādin literature.

15. Chronological aspects

The three phases in the development of *abhidhamma* discussion which have been identified (section 10 above) can be approximately located in time. The Sammatīya tradition cited by Bhavya would suggest that *Phase One* might correspond to the period of debates at and just before the Mauryan period. *Phase*

Two would be during the Mauryan period and *Phase Three* at the end of the Mauryan period. The Pāli sources would locate the second phase in the reign of Aśoka. The third phase must then be later. The Pāli sources and the Sammatīya tradition are in that case approximately in line. There is, however, no way in which this can be reconciled with the Sarvāstivādin sources according to which the divisions among the Sthaviras do not begin until a hundred years after the accession of Aśoka.

It does not seem possible in the present state of historical knowledge to reach a firm decision either way. Perhaps, however, the balance of advantage still lies with the long chronology. Certain things follow, it seems, from whichever choice is made. If the long chronology is correct, then the Sarvāstivādin traditions as to the date of the works contained in their own *Abhidharmapiṭaka* may not be correct. We should probably date some of the later works earlier than tradition claims. Their dates will have been brought down in time to fit a shorter period than was actually the case.

Conversely, if the Sarvāstivādin tradition is correct, then certain aspects of the Sinhalese tradition cannot be accepted. In particular it will be difficult to accept the claim[114] that the Pāli canonical texts were set in writing for the first time at the end of the reign of Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya (89–77 BC) after a Tamil invasion leading to a period of Tamil rule and soon after the separation of the Abhayagirikas from the Mahāvihāra. As Bechert has commented,[115] "... beginning with that period [second century BC] the Ceylonese chronicles can be considered as highly reliable sources of historical information". They are in fact often confirmed by archaeological evidence. Given that this is the case, it is difficult to reject their testimony about events in Ceylon.

Bechert has recently revived the suggestion that there are indications of the presence of the short chronology in Ceylon at an early date.[116] This, I think, is mistaken, but there is evidence of a slightly different version of the long chronology. Most Ceylonese sources date the accession of Aśoka to 218 BE and the third communal recitation to 236 BE (i.e. 218 + 18). The commentary to the first book of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*, the *Aṭṭhasālinī* three times states that Moggaliputta Tissa promulgated the *Kathāvatthu* in 218 BE.[117] This strongly suggests that there may have been an earlier tradition which dated the third communal recitation to 218 BE. The precise authorship of the *Aṭṭhasālinī* is debated[118] but it is clear that, whether it was an early work of Buddhaghosa himself or the work of an associate, it is less carefully edited than most of the other commentaries and sometimes preserves earlier traditions which have been normalized elsewhere.[119]

It was turn to the *Samantapāsādika*, we find an account of the legend of Moggalliputta Tissa.[120] This begins with the Elders of the second communal recitation searching the future to see if the *sāsana* will have such a scandal again. They see that "in the 118th year from now" a king named Dhammāsoka will arise, will generously give support, and many non-Buddhist mendicants (*titthiya*) will enter the *sāsana* and cause such an affair. The Elders decide to

visit the future Moggaliputta who is at that time dwelling in the Brahmā world. They inform him that there would be a great scandal in the *sāsana* "in the 118th year from now". So we see that *both* the accession of Aśoka *and* the third communal recitation are attributed to 218 BE. Very probably this is the tradition that the Sinhalese found in the old commentary to the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* when they set out to determine the chronology of past events.

The *Mahāvaṃsa* gives an account of the life of Aśoka first and so only refers back to the elders' beholding the future, but it then goes on to the story of their visit to the future Moggaliputta and gives the same prediction of a time of trouble 'after 118 years'.[121] The *Dīpavaṃsa* simply begins with the prophecy regarding Moggaliputta: "That monk, an exemplary *samaṇa*, will arise 118 years in the future".[122] It is clear that the reason that no introductory account is given is that the *ācariyavāda* has been inserted between the prophecy and the first account of the second communal recitation. Nevertheless it clearly belongs in the context we find in the *Samantapāsādikā*. It must belong in the same context here, since the *parinibbāna* of the Elders of the second communal recitation is immediately mentioned, which would be unnecessary if the prophecy was by the Buddha. This cannot then be evidence of the presence of the short chronology. It is simply that the earlier prediction of the 'time of trouble' has become a prediction of the 'arising' of Moggaliputta.

The other passage in the *Dīpavaṃsa* which is cited as evidence for the short chronology occurs in the first chapter. The first communal recitation is mentioned; then the next *śloka* declares: "118 years after that will be the third recension."[123] As Oldenberg points out in his edition, the simplest explanation for this is that a *śloka* which mentioned the second communal recitation has dropped out.[124] This passage, then, like the *Aṭṭhasālinī* passage mentioned above is evidence for the date of 218 BE for the third communal recitation. The only other evidence known to me for the short chronology in Ceylonese sources is a verse attributed to the 'Ancients' (*Porāṇā*) in the late fourteenth century *Saddhammasaṅgaha*.[125] However, this text refers to verses from the *Cūlavaṃsa* as by the 'Ancients'; so it is not evidence for an early date. Moreover, it has not been critically edited and the verse concerned is easily amended.[126]

There is, then, no reason to believe that the short chronology was known in ancient Ceylon, but considerable support for the existence of a tradition that the third communal recitation took place 118 years after the second. One might guess that originally the commentorial tradition recorded the same figure for both the king and the recitation. Subsequently it was realized that this was unlikely and the date of the recitation was moved a further eighteen years on. It seems better to adopt the reverse procedure. This would suggest that the accession of Aśoka took place about a hundred years after the second communal recitation (assuming that the third recitation took place about eighteen years later).[127] However, it is more likely that the figure is notional and slightly exaggerated as with the second communal recitation. In this case the accession of Aśoka should have taken place between about 140 and 160 BE (70/80 + 70/80).

This has the virtue of bringing the Sinhalese traditions into line with Bhavya's Sammatīya account. If we date Aśoka's accession at 52 years after the accession of Candragupta in c.313 BC,[128] then the work of the founder of the Pudgalavādins will take place around 261 BC with Moggalliputta's response and the third communal recitation, if there was one, at c.243 BC. The beginning of the controversies would be 63 years before Aśoka, i.e. c.324 BC under Mahāpadma Nanda. We know of course that a Nanda was ruling in Magadha at the time of Alexander's invasion (327–324 BC). This would imply a date for the beginning of the Buddhist era between 400 and 420 BC. Other evidence would also seem to support a date close to the end of the fifth century BC.[129]

It may be suggested that one reason why the length of time has been increased is an attempt to fit a king list with the Buddhist traditions. It seems most unlikely that the Buddhist *saṅgha* would have preserved a list of the kings of Magadha together with their regnal years. When the Sinhalese found a need for such a list, there is only one place they could have got it: the brahmins. If there is a general similarity between the Sinhalese tradition and that in the *Purāṇas*, it is because the Sinhalese got it from the *Purāṇas* or from where the *Purāṇas* got it. In fact we have no certainty of the existence of any other source from which they could have got it.

Summary

Sections 1–4 examine the historical problems and background, suggest a date of around 70–80 BE for the Council of Vaiśāli and discuss the available sources of information on the early Buddhist schools. The significance for this of the 'Five Points' is indicated. A discussion of the date of the *Kathāvatthu* indicates a stage in which there was a three-way controversy: Sarvāstivāda, Pudgalavāda and Vibhajyavāda.

Sections 5–10 examine the first four 'Points' in detail and seek to show that in their original form the fifth 'Point' was the question as to whether an arahat can fall away. The logical structure of the original 'Five Points' is indicated and it is suggested that in this form they were probably Sarvāstivādin. Three phases in the development of the *Kathāvatthu* are proposed.

Sections 11–14 examine the fifth 'Point' and explore its connection with the Mahādeva associated with the development of the later (southern) Mahāsāṅghika schools. Evidence from the *Kathāvatthu* is brought to bear on the nature of the earliest Mahāsāṅghika schools. The new formulation of the 'Five Points' is examined and suggestions are made as to the nature of the new developments among the Mahāsāṅghikas. In particular, trends to emphasize the altruistic value of developing the higher *jhānas* and a new formulation of a Mahāsāṅghika *abhidharma* seem likely.

Section 15 examines the chronological implications. Evidence in the Ceylon sources is advanced to support the existence of an early tradition dating the

'Third Council' to 218 BE. The suggestion that there is evidence for a 'short chronology' tradition in the Pāli sources is refuted.

Addendum

In late 1989 Professor Richard Gombrich circulated a paper on the date of the Buddha.[130] He has kindly given permission for it to be referred to here prior to publication. In this paper he has offered an ingenious reinterpretation of the data given in the *Dīpavaṃsa* and has convincingly shown that the information given there on the ages of the teachers in the *vinaya* lineage of Mahinda (traditionally interpreted as their age since ordination) is better and more consistently interpreted as their age since birth (or conception). This produces a date for the accession of Aśoka of c.136 BE (with a margin of uncertainty due to the addition of a series of life-spans given in figures rounded to whole years).

Gombrich takes the date of the accession of Aśoka to be c.268 BC and therefore suggests that the Buddha's death took place "within six or even five" years of 404 BC. His argument can, I believe, be taken one step further. Gombrich discards all data given in the Pāli chronicles as to regnal years. This seems in general appropriate. However, the information in chapter five of the *Dīpavaṃsa* about the date of accession of Candragupta is likely to have been handed down as part of the *vinaya* lineage.[131] If so, Candragupta ascended the throne in c.100 BE.[132]

Taking the accession of Candragupta to occur in c.313 BC, the following approximate chronology arises:

BC		BE
413	Mahāparinibbāna of the Buddha	0
343/333	Second communal recitation	70/80
331	Birth of Moggaliputta Tissa[133]	82
326/5	Alexander in India	87/88
313	Accession of Candragupta	100
277	Accession of Aśoka[134]	136
271	Ordination of Mahinda	142
259	Third communal recitation	154
245	Death of Moggaliputta Tissa	168

Although these dates are only approximate, they offer a real possibility of establishing a definitive chronology, if new archaeological or other information should come to light.

The reason why the Ceylon chronicles went astray is now clear. They must have had access to brahmanical traditions on the regnal years of the kings of Magadha (as well as to a northern account of the development of the 'eighteen' schools). They constructed (in the *Mahāvaṃsa* or its sources) a new, more consistent chronology in an attempt to reconcile their own traditions (which must

have been based on the lineage of Mahinda) with the new data. Ironically, it transpires that they would have been better advised to be less open to overseas influences and keep their own tradition.

Notes

1 E. Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature*, Rome, 1956, 5.
2 e.g. Kv-a 2–3.
3 e.g. Dīp V, 51.
4 e.g. Kv-a 3.
5 *ibid.*
6 Dīp V, 53; Kv-a 3.
7 E. Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, Louvain, 1958, 14–15.
8 Later translations mention 116 BE, but it seems clear that originally the work, like the *Dīpavaṃsa*, specified only the century. See A. Bareau, "Trois traités sur les sectes bouddhiques attribués à Vasumitra", *JA*, 1954, 236ff.
9 E. Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, 310; 587–8; A. Bareau, *Les sectes bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule*, Saigon, 1955, 17.
10 E.J. Thomas, "Theravādin and Sarvāstivādin Dates of the Nirvāṇa", *B.C. Law Volume*, Part II, Poona, 1946, replied to by J. Filliozat, "Les deux Aśoka et les conciles bouddhiques", *JA*, 1948, 189–95; E. Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, 13–15, however, adopts the long chronology as a working hypothesis; H. Bechert's several recent articles: "The Date of the Buddha Reconsidered", *IT*, 1982, 29–36, "A Remark on the Problem of the Date of Mahāvīra", *IT*, 1983, 187–90, *Die Lebenszeit des Buddha — das älteste fest stehende Datum der indischen Geschichte?*, Göttingen, 1985, "Remarks on the Date of the Historical Buddha", *Buddhist Studies*, 1988, 97–117.
11 According to E. Mayeda, "Japanese Studies on the Schools of the Chinese Āgamas", in H. Bechert, *Zur Schulzugehörigkeit von Werken der Hīnayāna-Literatur*, Göttingen, 1985, 101, most Japanese scholars take this to be a Dharmaguptaka work. A. Bareau, *Les sectes bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule*, 201ff. suggests Kāśyapīya which seems plausible.
12 M. Hofinger, *Étude sur le concile de Vaiśāli*, Louvain, 1946, usefully criticized by P. Demiéville, "À propos du concile de Vaiśāli", *TP*, 1951, 239–96.
13 M. Hofinger, *op. cit.*, 167; E. Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature*, 55.
14 The Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins is well known to have been revised at a late date, while the portion of the Sarvāstivādin Vinaya which contains the account of the councils is an addition translated at a later time — P. Demiéville, "A propos du Concile de Vaiśāli", 242ff. See also P.H.L. Eggermont, "New Notes on Aśoka and his Successors, II", 88, and H. Bechert, *Die Lebenszeit des Buddha*, 160.
15 M. Hofinger, *op. cit.*, 26, 146, 147 and also the list of years of *upasampadā* on page 124. Only the Mahīśāsaka and Mahāsāṅghika accounts in fact make such a claim.
16 M. Hofinger, *op. cit.*, 27, 48, 50, 51, 57, 80, 92, 93, 99, 101, 133, 139, 140, 143.
17 *Paṭhaviyā saṃghathero* — see M. Hofinger, *op. cit.*, 90–93.
18 According to Th 1039–43 Ānanda attended the Buddha for 25 years. He could not, therefore, have been less than 45 years old at the time of the *parinibbāna*.
19 It might be argued that life expectancy would have been lower at the time. However, we are dealing with a group of individuals who are teetotal, non-smoking and celibate. They would have had plenty of exercise and would usually be regarded as

noncombatants in situations of conflict. Data on life expectancy from Egypt in the early centuries AD suggest a 50% mortality rate for each decade of life after adolescence, but this would be for the general population. See N. Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule*, 54. Even the later Dīp IV 50, 52; V 23 claim that they had all 'seen the Tathāgata' is not entirely ruled out. A small child could well have been taken to 'see the Tathāgata' at a very young age and told about the event when it was older. As late as 80 BE the oldest monk alive would very likely have some such memory.

20 This line of thought was first suggested to me by Richard Gombrich, but my conclusions differ slightly from his. See R. Gombrich, "The History of Early Buddhism: Major Advances since 1950", *Indological Studies and South Asian Bibliography — a Conference*, Calcutta, 1986, 17.

21 E. Lamotte, *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse*, Louvain, 1944, 111n.

22 P. Demiéville, "À propos du concile de Vaiśāli", 263n.

23 E. Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, 303ff.

24 A. Bareau, "Trois traités sur les sectes bouddhiques attribués à Vasumitra, Bhavya et Vinītadeva", 1954, 236; *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, 98ff. See also E. Lamotte's *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, 302, and E. Frauwallner, "Die buddhistischen Konzile", 243ff.

25 A. Bareau, "Trois traités sur les sectes bouddhiques attribués à Vasumitra, Bhavya et Vinītadeva", 1956, 172; C. Vogel, "Bu-ston on the Schism of the Buddhist Church and on the Doctrinal Tendencies of Buddhist Scriptures", in H. Bechert, *Zur Schulzugehörigkeit von Werken der Hīnayāna-Literatur*, Calcutta, 1984, 104.

26 AD 274–302 (G.C. Mendis, "The Chronology of the Early Pāli Chronicles of Ceylon", *UCR*, 1947, 54). Mendis, following Paranavitana, rejects the notion that an era based on 483 BC was known in ancient Ceylon. H. Bechert, "The Date of the Buddha Reconsidered", 32, agrees but R. Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism*, London, 1988, 141n., prefers to retain the traditional dating of Wickremasinghe (followed by Geiger). For Mahāsena this would give dates of 334–361/2.

27 Dīp V 30ff; Mhv V 3–4; Mhbv 96.

28 Kv-a 2–5.

29 A. Bareau, *Les sectes bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule*, 16ff.

30 *EI*, XX, 22.

31 E.W. Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Colombo, 1946, 12; K.R. Norman, *Pāli Literature*, Wiesbaden, 1983, 121–2.

32 Dīp V 54; Mhv V 12–13; Kv-a 5; Mhbv 97; cf. Kv-a 52.

33 Probably the later term *Vetullaka* has been substituted for them in the extant version of Kv-a, just as the term *Vetulyavāda* (Mhv XXXVI, 41) replaces the earlier *Vitaṇḍavāda* (Dīp XXII 43–44).

34 *Etarahi* occurs throughout *vaggas* 2 and 3, predominates in *vaggas* 1 and 4 and peters out in *vagga* 5. Apart from one occurrence in the eighth *vagga* it does not occur again except in *vaggas* 17 and 18 where it is always applied to the Vetullakas. This may be because one is intended to take it as read after the first few *vaggas*. Alternatively, it is possible that the original information available for these did not make sense and so the commentator has substituted a reference to the contemporary situation.

35 E. Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, 189.

36 So M i 164–5.

37 Dīp IV 13; V 14.

38 K.R. Norman, *Pāli Literature*, 103–5; E. Frauwallner, "Abhidharma-Studien IV", *WZKS*, 1972, 124.

39 Kv 608–609.

40 Māgadhisms outside the *puggalakathā* are particularly prominent at Kv 119–120 and 159–162 i.e. in discussions related to *sabbam atthi*.
41 K.R. Norman, "Māgadhisms in the *Kathāvatthu*"; also K.R. Norman, "Pāli and the language of the heretics"; cf. H. Bechert, "Über Singhalesisches im Pālikanon", 71–75.
42 Louis de La Vallée Poussin, "La controverse du temps et du pudgala dans le Vijñānakāya", *EA*, 1925; F. Watanabe, *Philosophy and its Development in the Nikāyas and Abhidhamma*, Delhi, 1983, 174ff., and next.
43 *Kośa*, (= *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, tr. L. de La Vallée Poussin), I, xxxiv; so also E. Frauwallner, "Die buddhistischen Konzile", *ZDMG*, 1952, 258.
44 Mp ii, 309–10.
45 First identified by La Vallée Poussin, "The 'Five Points' of Mahādeva and the Kathāvatthu", *JRAS*, 1910, 413–23. See also on the 'Five Points': P. Demiéville, "Les versions chinoises du Milindapañha", *BEFEO*, 1924, 60–62; "L'origine des sectes bouddhiques d'après Paramārtha", *MCB*, 1932, 30–40; "À propos du Concile de Vaiśāli", *TP*, 1951, 262ff.; E. Lamotte, "Buddhist Controversy over the Five Propositions", *IHQ*, 1956, 148–62; J. Nattier and C. Prebish, "Mahāsaṃghika Origins", *HR*, 250–257; A. Bareau, "Les controverses relatives à la nature de l'arhant", *IIJ*, 1957, 241–50.
46 Compare even Kv 69–70 with 195 for the fifth point but mainly Kv 79ff. with 168ff., 175, 182, 189ff. (ten *kilesas*); 85–86 with 169, 175–6, 182, 190 (*bodhipakkhiyadhammas*, followed by a stock phrase on the arahat); 86ff. with 170–2, 176–8, 182–4, 190–2 (*samayavimutta/asamayavimutta* parallelled by *sadhammakusala/paradhammakusala*); the parallelism continues with citations from *suttanta*. This structural similarity is badly obscured by the translation.
47 *Kośa*, VI, 56–65, etc.; cf. A. Bareau, "Les controverses relatives à la nature de l'arhant", 244; it does not seem that this can be a Mahāsāṅghika view since they appear to have held the reverse thesis that it is the stream-winner and not the arahat who can fall away. It is just possible that Pudgalavādins could be meant here.
48 N.A. Sastri, *Satyasiddhiśāstra of Harivarman*, Baroda, 1978, II; 288ff. Ki-tsang gives a similar interpretation: P. 32, but the *Jñānaprasthāna* appears to apply it to doubt on the part of arahats as to their own liberation (*ibid.*).
49 P. Demiéville, *op. cit.*, 32n.: E. Lamotte, "Buddhist Controversy over the Five Propositions", 148; Nattier and Prebish, *op. cit.*, 253.
50 P. Demiéville, *op. cit.*, 35n.
51 One MS has *parivitāraṇā*. Some such reading is probably the source of Bhavya's interpretation: 'la connaissance parfaite' — A. Bareau, "Trois traités sur les sectes bouddhiques attribués à Vasumitra, Bhavya et Vinītadeva", *JA*, 1956, 173.
52 See PTC s.v. *tīraṇa* and *tīreti* as well as *Pāli-English Dictionary*, s.v. *vitarati*. Some of these senses are more plausible in the *abhidhamma* context. Later interpreters have tended to take the primary Sanskrit meaning of 'crossing over'; cp. also *tiṇṇā kaṅkhā* D ii 276; 279; 281–3.
53 Paṭis is certainly another text of this formative period. See A.K. Warder's introduction to Paṭis tr.
54 The second of the 'Five Points' is precisely *kaṅkhā* in the *Kathāvatthu*. Most other sources reverse the order of the second and third points, which means that *kaṅkhā* immediately precedes *paravitāraṇā*. This may be earlier, but one late source, Vinītadeva follows the Pāli order — A. Bareau, *op. cit.*, 194. It is also possible that the verse cited by Pseudo-Vasumitra, etc. has changed the order for metrical reasons (see n.71 below).
55 Cf. Paṭis ii, 63.
56 P. Demiéville, *op. cit.*, 32n.

57 *ibid.*, 39–40.
58 This would not be acceptable in later Theravāda, since all arahats are held to have reviewing of defilements abandoned (in contradistinction to *sekhiyas* who need not), cf. Vism 676ff.
59 P. Masefield, *Divine Revelation in Pali Buddhism*, Colombo, 1986, collects the data on this.
60 Prior to the development of the theory of the *nirvedhabhāgiyas* which contains elements of a synthesis with *ekâbhisamaya* views.
61 "The 'Five Points' of Mahādeva and the Kathāvatthu", 420.
62 Item 9 in the same *vagga* of the *Kathāvatthu*.
63 This is attested both for Ceylon (e.g. Mhv XXXVI 41; 111–2) and for Central Asia. See Z. Tsukamoto, *A History of Chinese Buddhism*, Tokyo, 1985, index s.v. Hīnayāna, Khotan, Kucha, etc.
64 P. Demiéville, "L'origine des sectes bouddhiques d'après Paramārtha", 31n.
65 See also A. Bareau, *op. cit.*, 242n.
66 A. Bareau, *ibid.*, 172n. The second list in Bhavya (*ibid.* 174) and Vinītadeva must be interpreting *upahāra* as 'providing teaching'.
67 So E. Lamotte, "Buddhist Controversy over the Five Propositions", 148; cf. A. Bareau ("Les controverses relatives à la nature de l'arhant", 242) "séduit par autrui"; A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, 216 '... an *arahat* may have erotic dreams due to visitations by goddesses'.
68 Vin i 295.
69 P. Demiéville, "L'origine des sectes bouddhiques d'après Paramārtha", 35.
70 Kv 172.
71 The first line must be, in Middle Indian form, something comparable to:

parûpahāro aññāṇaṃ / kaṅkhā paravitāraṇā //

Note that this requires the change in the order of the second and third 'points'. Compare Sp iv, 874. (See notes 76 and 84 below.)
72 M i 243: deities offer to introduce food by means of the pores of the body (*dibbaṃ ojaṃ ... ajjhohareyyuṃ*); cp. later the *ehibhikkhûpasampadā*.
73 See J. Jolly, *Indian Medicine*, Poona, 1951, 65 for the list of the seven reservoirs, which does not include one for *sukka*.
74 For the Pudgalavāda, see now P. Skilling, "The Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛta-Viniśaya of Daśabalaśrīmitra", *BSR*, 1987, 3–23, and T.T. Chau, "Le personnalisme du Bouddhisme ancien", *ICO*, 1973; "The Literature of the Pudgalavādins", *JIABS*, 1984, 7–16; "Les réponses des Pudgalavādin", *JIABS*, 1987, 33–53 as well as K. Venkataramanan, "Sāmmitīyanikāya Śāstra", *VBA*, 1953, 153–243, La Vallée Poussin, "La controverse du temps et du pudgala dans le Vijñānakāya"; *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, ch. 9. S. Schayer, "Kamalaśīla's Kritik des Pudgalavāda", *RO*, 1932, 68–93 and my forthcoming article "Person and Self" to appear in the proceedings of the Buddhism 2000 conference (Bangkok, 1990). E. Frauwallner, "Abhidharma-Studien III", *WZKS*, 1971, 69–121 makes plain the origin of the Sarvāstivāda as a coherent whole. For the Vibhajyavāda it is manifest in the Pāli canonical *abhidhamma*.
75 Pudgalavādin are: 1–69; 93–115; Sarvāstivādin are: 69–93; 103–9; 115–51; 212–20; 225–7; closely related are: 151–55; 159–63. If the first four 'Points' were originally Sarvāstivādin (i.e. 163–95), there can have been very little in the first two *vaggas* concerned with schools other than these two.
76 If there was originally a mnemonic verse (note 71 above), then the *pādas* of the second line might have been either:

arahā parihāyati / etaṃ Buddhāna sāsanam // or
arahattā parihāni / etaṃ Buddhānusāsanam //

77 E. Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, 309–10.

78 *ibid.*

79 See Nattier and Prebish, *op. cit.*, 258–64 for the view that Mahādeva and the 'Five Points' must be associated with 'southern' Mahāsāṅghika schools.

80 A good example of this is at Kv-a 60 where the distinction between *appaṭisaṅkhā-nirodha* and *paṭisaṅkhā-nirodha* is attributed to the Mahiṃsāsakas and the Andhakas. Yet it must surely be Sarvāstivādin.

81 See A. Bareau, *op. cit.*, 244; *Les Sectes bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule*, 66. This seems to be what is said in Pseudo-Vasumitra, although the earliest translation differs: A. Bareau, "Trois traités sur les sectes bouddhiques attribués à Vasumitra, Bhavya et Vinītadeva", 243n. Bhavya is silent, but Vinītadeva (*idem*, page 194) attributes the view that there is no falling away from either arahatship or stream-entry to the Lokottaravādins. Bareau cites the *Vibhāṣā*. Kv-a 37 attributes the view that arahats can fall away to some Mahāsāṅghikas. Probably this idea was admitted later in the Andhaka schools.

82 *Maggapariyāpannaṃ* must be an intrusion into the text of *Kathāvatthu* from the commentary.

83 A. Bareau (*op. cit.*, 174) — *duḥkhahāni* has probably been translated in place of *duḥkhâhāro*, presumably a manuscript error.

84 Vinītadeva — A. Bareau, "Trois traités sur les sectes bouddhiques attribués à Vasumitra, Bhavya et Vinītadeva", 194 is very close. The other two occurrences in Bhavya must be related (*idem*, 173 and 188). No less than three alternative versions of it have been added in the later translations of Pseudo-Vasumitra (*idem*, p. 243). In the version of the *Mahāvibhāṣā* and in the actual list of the 'Five Points' given in Pseudo-Vasumitra a version is given in which an expression meaning 'verbal enunciation' seems to have replaced 'enunciating *dukkha*'. Certainly if the *pāda* could be replaced easily by one meaning: "Ce sont là tes paroles démentes", as Ki-tsang tells us, then some word from the root *vac* must have been introduced — cf. P. Demiéville, *op. cit.*, 36). Nevertheless it seems fairly likely that the verse attributed to Mahādeva would in Pāli form be similar to:

parûpahāro aññāṇaṃ /
kaṅkhā paravitāraṇā //
dukkhâhāro ca maggaṅgaṃ /
etaṃ Buddhāna (or ānu) sāsanaṃ //

85 Later interpreters have ingeniously understood that suffering is the food that keeps beings alive in the *nirayas* — J. Masuda, "Origin and Doctrines of the Early Buddhist Schools", *AM*, 1925, 25n.

86 CPD s.v. *aṅga*.

87 P. Demiéville, "L'origine des sectes bouddhiques d'après Paramārtha", 32–3; 36; 40.

88 P. Masefield, *op. cit.*

89 Kv 572–573.

90 Kv 453–455.

91 The bottom 15 lines of p. 223 correspond very closely to the top 14 lines on p. 204.

92 A good example of the last is the irony which greets the notion of the fragrance of the Buddha's excrement (Kv 563) — "due to inappropriate affection for the Lord".

93 G. Roth, *Bhikṣuṇī-vinaya*, Patna, 1970, 248n.

94 e.g. M. Hofinger, *op. cit.*, 178–9; A. Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, 86ff.; C.S. Prebish, "A Review of Scholarship on the Buddhist Councils", *JAS*, 1974, 251ff.; A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, 1970, 214; G. Roth, *op. cit.*, x.

95 Nattier and Prebish, *op. cit.*, 265–70 accept the Mahāsāṅghika account too readily.

96 H. Bechert, *Zur Schulgehörigkeit von Werken der Hīnayāna-Literatur*, 20–44.
97 A. Bareau, "Trois traités sur les sectes bouddhiques attribués à Vasumitra, Bhavya et Vinītadeva", 1956, 173.
98 Kv 208–212.
99 cf. A iii 443–444.
100 Possibly the inhabitants of that monastery interpreted its name as derived from the Māgadhī equivalent to *Kukūla*. Bhavya's first list includes mention of a school called Kurukula supposed to be another name for the Sammitīyas. This list does not include the Kaukkuṭikas; so Kurukula is probably a rendering of their name. In BHSD we also have Kurkuṭârāma.
101 This could be due to invasion, but note that the *Aśokâvadāna* and other sources attribute the destruction of this monastery to Puṣyamitra — E. Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, 425–30.
102 Kv 224.
103 Compare the series at Kv 315–6 where we learn that disciples do not make known the aggregates (*khandhapaññatti*), ... bases, ... elements, ... truths, ... faculties and ... persons.
104 E. Lamotte, *op. cit.*, 582–3.
105 Dīp V, 42; Mhv V 5; Kv-a 2; 4 indicate the Pāli as Cetiyavādā(ī). Inscriptions give both Cetiyavaṃdaka and Cetiavadaka (Lamotte, *idem*, p. 500).
106 M iii 74.
107 R. Gethin, "The Path to Awakening. A Study of the Thirty Seven *Bodhipakkhiya-dhammā* in the *Nikāyas* and *Abhidhamma*", Ph D thesis, University of Manchester, 1987, gives a full account of the development of the theory of the *magga* and associated ideas.
108 See *Kathāvatthu Index s.v. samodhānaṃ*.
109 J. Bronkhorst, *The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India*, Stuttgart, 1986.
110 E. Frauwallner, "Abhidharma-Studien III", 103.
111 A. Bareau, *Les sectes bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule*, 296–305. However, I would not wish to rule out an association of the Madhyamaka with the Sarvāstīvāda. Both schools are largely insight-orientated and Madhyamaka dialectic can be seen as emerging from *abhidharma* debate. If so, we would expect Mahāyāna literature of a Madhyamaka orientation to be of northern origin and reach China more rapidly. This does seem to be the case, but such a suggestion is speculative at present.
112 L.S. Cousins, "The *Paṭṭhāna* and the Development of the Theravādin *abhidhamma*", *JPTS*, 1981, 22; L. Schmithausen, *Ālayavijñāna*, Tokyo, 1987, II, 255, n. 68.
113 See now G. Schopen, "The Inscription on the Kuṣān Image of Amitābha and the Character of the Early Mahāyāna in India", *JIABS*, 1987, 99–137 and P. Harrison, "Who Gets to Ride in the Great Vehicle? Self-image and Identity Among the Followers of the Early Mahāyāna", *JIABS*, 1987, 67–89.
114 e.g. Dīp XX, 20–21.
115 H. Bechert, "The Date of the Buddha Reconsidered", 34–35.
116 H. Bechert, *Die Lebenszeit des Buddha*, 146–9; "Remarks on the Date of the Historical Buddha", 101–2.
117 As 3–4; 6. The first occurrence is attributed to a Vitaṇḍavādin, the other two to a prophecy of the Buddha.
118 P.V. Bapat & R.D. Vadekar, *Aṭṭhasālinī*, xxxiii ff.; Norman, *Pāli Literature*, 122–5.
119 L.S. Cousins, *op. cit.*, 38–9.
120 Sp 35ff. The Chinese version is almost the same; see P.V. Bapat, *Han-chien-p'i-p'osha*, 20–21.
121 Mhv V, 100.
122 Dīp V, 55.

123 Dīp I, 25.
124 *ibid.*, 15n.; cf. J. Filliozat, "Les deux Aśoka et les conciles bouddhiques", 190.
125 Saddhamma-s 47.
126 J. Filliozat, *op. cit.*, 191. Two other verses attributed to the *Purāṇā* are also relevant. Saddhamma-s 35 gives a date for the third communal recitation of 228 BE, while Saddhamma-s 44 gives the date of 238 BE for Mahinda's 'Fourth Council'.
127 K.R. Norman, "Aśoka's 'Schism' Edict", *Buddhist Seminar*, Kyoto, 1987, 16–18, summarizes the various Pāli accounts relating to the third communal recitation. The figure 'eighteen' is probably notional for a number of years. See G. Obeyesekere, "Myth, History and Numerology in the Buddhist Chronicles", to appear in the volume mentioned below (note 129).
128 J. Filliozat, "La date de l'avènement de Candragupta roi du Magadha (313 avant J.-C.)". Filliozat's arguments are not conclusive. However, since Candragupta's accession must be between Alexander's departure from India in 325 BC and the return of Seleucus from India to the battle of Ipsus in 302 BC, it represents a convenient median date. Magas of Cyrene probably died in c.250 BC. — see F. Chamoux and further references in Peremans and Van't Dack, *Prosopographica Ptolemaica* VI; E. Will, *Histoire politique du monde hellénistique*, Nancy, 1979, I, 66ff; 264ff.
129 See K.R. Norman, "Observations on the Dates of the Buddha and the Jina" (to be published in a volume on the date of the Buddha edited by H. Bechert).
130 The title of the manuscript was "Dating the Buddha: A Red Herring Revealed".
131 Dīp V 69.
132 Could this be the source of some of the 'short chronology' traditions? The later more familiar name of Aśoka could have been substituted for that of Candragupta.
133 The story in Sp of the Elders of the second communal recitation visiting Moggaliputta Tissa in the Brahmā world and requesting him to take birth now fits in very well (see pp. 47–48 above).
134 The five Greek kings mentioned in the 13th Rock Edict would then be:

1. The Seleucid Antiochus I (281/280–261 BC) or Antiochus II (261–246 BC)
2. Ptolemy II of Egypt (285/283–246 BC)
3. Antigonus II of Macedonia (276–239 BC)
4. Alexander II of Epirus (from 272/271 BC — date of death not known)
5. Magas of Cyrenaica (c.275–c.250 BC).

The Edict could not have been inscribed before the accession of Alexander of Epirus in 272/271 BC nor much after 250 BC.

22

PERSON AND SELF*

L.S. Cousins

Source: *Dhammakaya Foundation Studies in Philosophy and Buddhist Scriptural Language Presented by Leading Scholars Worldwide* (1994). Patumthani, Thailand: Dhammakaya Foundation, pp. 15–30.

The source of this paper lies in a concern to explore the nature of Buddhism in the Mauryan period — a time when Buddhism existed in forms which underly all present existing Buddhist schools. In fact this is one of a series of papers looking at the two major *Vinaya* traditions (Mahāsaṅghika and Sthaviravāda/Theravāda) and the three major schools of thought which developed at this time (Vibhajyavāda/Vibhajjavāda, Sarvāstivāda and Pudgalavāda). The present study is concerned with the last of these, the school of Personalists who held that there was a person (*puggala*) which existed in a real sense (*paramatthato, dravyatas*) as something which cannot be said to be either conditioned (*saṅkhata*) or unconditioned. After a brief consideration of the origin of the school, the main issues of debate as portrayed in surviving (critical) Sanskrit sources are identified. Reference is then made to the available information in the two Pudgalavādin texts which survive in Chinese. This material from the first millenium A.D. is then compared with the much earlier criticism found in the Sarvāstivādin *Vijñānakāya* and (earliest of all) the Vibhajjavādin *Kathāvatthu*. The last in particular seems most aware of the actual position of the Pudgalavādins.

The last decade of Buddhist studies in Europe has seen a revision of ideas about the early history of Buddhism. The most notable area of this has perhaps been the important discussions and articles on the date of the Buddha initiated by Heinz Bechert. A consensus seems to be emerging which places the date of the *parinibbāna* of the Buddha towards the end of the fifth century, if not later.[1] Another important area of rethinking is a renewed attempt to gain some idea as to what Buddhism was like in the earliest period.[2] The present paper belongs in some respects with this second line of scholarly exploration.

It is clear that there is at present no agreement among scholars as to the precise methods which are most suitable for this purpose. Various attempts have been made to stratify the materials preserved in the Pali Canon and elsewhere. This leads inevitably to the identification of a group of ideas and practices of

some relatively less complex kind as 'original' or 'earliest' Buddhism. I am myself convinced that such an endeavour, although often interesting, is somewhat premature. My concern is rather to try to gain a clear conception of the nature of Buddhism at a slightly later date. The advantage of this is that we can then take for granted the existence of the bulk of the canonical sources and work with a relatively large amount of source material. This at least ensures that the Buddhism we reconstruct is reasonably close to something that must once have existed and provides some restraint on the introduction of pet ideas and present day concerns.

The particular value of this approach is that, in seeking to understand the nature of Buddhism in the Mauryan period around the third century B.C., we are exploring the shared roots from which all forms of Buddhism today derive their heritage. It is especially interesting to seek to comprehend the way in which the process of diversification, already underway at this time, has brought about so many different kinds of Buddhism. Until relatively recent times no other religious tradition was anywhere near as successful at adapting itself to such very different cultural contexts.

Historical background

In fact when we explore this period of Buddhist history we find that surprisingly little is known. Traditionally, there were eighteen schools or 'sects' of Buddhism at this time, but the list varies in different textual sources.[3] Some of these are mentioned in inscriptions (mostly A.D. in date) and some others not included in textual lists are found in the archæological evidence.[4] It seems that eighteen is more a notional figure of symbolic significance than a literal enumeration. In some cases extremely minor, perhaps even quite imaginary, fraternities have probably been included to make the number up to eighteen.

Looking more carefully at Buddhism in this period, it seems that two great traditions of Vinaya practice had come into existence. The tradition known in Sanskrit as the Sthaviravāda (Pali Theravāda) is the ancestor of all existing branches of the Buddhist *saṅgha* today (including those of East Asia and Tibet). The other major form of monastic practice was the Mahāsaṅghika branch, which probably became extinct in the late mediæval period. These two sections of the saṅgha were not originally distinguished by doctrine so much as by details of monastic practice — this can be compared to the difference between the two main sections of the *saṅgha* in Thailand today.[5]

Quite distinct from the traditions of Vinaya practice and probably of somewhat later origin were three major schools of thought: the Sarvāstivāda, the Vibhajyavāda (the Analysts — ancestors of the school which became established in Ceylon) and the Pudgalavāda. These schools were probably not originally separate fraternities or *nikāyas* so much as schools of thought either within the Sthaviravāda branch or within the *saṅgha* as a whole. I hope to look at the first of these schools on another occasion, but what concerns me in this paper is the

third school: the Pudgalavādins or Personalists.[6] This school at first sight poses something of a problem if we suppose that every kind of early Buddhism teaches some kind of doctrine of no-self or even that this is doctrinally distinctive of Buddhist thought. How could there have been a school of Buddhism which rejected so fundamental a part of Buddhist teaching and practice? Yet this school was widely influential[7] and accepted as part of the Buddhist tradition (*sāsane*).

The origins of the Pudgalavāda

The recent publication of translations of the appendix or ninth chapter to the *Abhidharmakośa* in which Vasubandhu rejects theories of self (*ātman/pudgala*) provides a convenient starting point.[8] The first half of this chapter refutes the teachings concerning the *pudgala* of a school named by Vasubandhu as the Vātsīputrīyas.[9] This school is generally believed to have been founded by an elder named Vātsīputra who lived sixty three years after the time of the Nandas (i.e. in the third century B.C.).[10] In fact there is good reason to doubt the existence of doctrinally based schools in the sense of distinct fraternities (*nikāya*) in the Mauryan and pre-Mauryan periods. Vātsīputra would have put forward (and perhaps systematized) his own version of the Buddha's teachings and won a following. No doubt other leading monks did likewise.

It is possible to doubt whether the name of this school really derives from the name of the monk (see Appendix to this article). However, the relics of *sappurisā* named Vāchīputa and Mogalīputa are referred to in inscriptions from Andher Stūpa II and Sāñchī Stūpa II.[11] Both are said to be the pupils of another famous monk named Gotīputa. If Vātsīputra is indeed the originator of the Pudgalavādin approach, it would certainly be he who is the opponent of Moggalliputta Tissa in the *puggalakathā* of the *Kathāvatthu*. It seems to be Moggalliputta who is referred to in a slightly later Sarvāstivādin work the *Vijñānakāya* of Devaśarman (preserved in Chinese) as the opponent of *sarvam asti*. Hsüan-tsang records a tradition that the originator of the Pudgalavāda was an arhat named Gopa who was the opponent of Devaśarman on this issue. Since both Gotīputa and Gopa are presumably derived from the root GUP, they could very well be versions or corruptions of the same metronymic. It may very well be the case that the name of the teacher has replaced that of the pupil.

Subsequently the followers of Vātsīputra (or his teacher) continued to develop the line of thought introduced by him and (in the Mauryan period) constituted a well-known approach to certain of the teachings of the Buddha. The most controversial of their ideas was their teaching that the person (*pudgala*) exists as a reality in the highest sense in contrast to the usual Buddhist view that the person exists only conventionally as a label. For this reason the Vātsīputrīya school of thought eventually became known as the Pudgalavāda (Personalism). It was only in the post-Mauryan period that there ultimately came to be distinct fraternities espousing Pudgalavādin doctrines.[12]

The four major areas of debate

Vasubandhu's refutation of the arguments of the Vātsīputrīyas is convenient as a starting point because it gives us a summary of a number of their views at a relatively well-defined point in time i.e. the fourth or fifth century A.D.. In fact Vasubandhu is almost certainly basing himself on Vaibhāṣika traditions of a somewhat earlier date, but that is probably not important for present purposes. The position of the Vātsīputrīyas, as Vasubandhu represents it, is that the 'person' is neither substantially real (*dravyatas*) nor real only by way of designation (*prajñaptitas*). It is made known (*prajñapyate*) in reliance upon aggregates which are internal (*adhyātmika*), appropriated (*upātta*) and of the present time. To illustrate this they give the example of the relationship between fire and fuel.[13] This seems to mean that a person is only made known when there are aggregates present. The person cannot be said to be something other than the aggregates as this would lead to eternalism. Nor can it be said not to be something other than the aggregates as this would lead to annihilationalism.

If we set aside issues of debate which turn on exegesis of statements in the *sūtras*, which can be taken as explicitly referring to no-self teachings or to persons, etc., it seems that there were four main areas of debate:

1. A group of problems connected with the 'undeclared questions' — any Buddhist theory of the person must avoid postulating or implying a soul which is either eternal or non-eternal. Nor may that soul be either identical with or different to the body. Similar problems arise here with the status of the Tathāgata after death and with the question as to whether suffering is self-caused, other-caused and the like.[14]
2. The problems involved in explaining *karma* and rebirth.
3. The issue as to the status of the person in relation to the unconditioned and the conditioned. The problem here is that the solution adopted by the *abhidharma* schools of the Vaibhāṣikas and of the Pali tradition — that the person exists only as a name or concept — is open to the criticism that it is effectively annihilationist and identifies the soul with the five aggregates. If so, the Tathāgata certainly cannot exist after death. The same is the case if the person is considered to be a conditioned *dharma*. On the other hand, if the Personalists were to declare the person unconditioned we would obviously have here a soul very much on the lines of the *Upaniṣads* — precisely the kind of *ātman* which is explicitly criticized in the *sūtras*. The solution adopted by the Pudgalavādins is to introduce an additional category — as well as conditioned (*saṃskṛta*) *dharmas* of past, present and future and unconditioned *dharmas*, there is also one *dharma* which cannot be spoken of as either conditioned or unconditioned: i.e. the *pudgala*.
4. Debate necessarily arises in relation to the analytical structures devised by the sūtras to support meditation on no-self — such lists as the aggregates, bases, elements and faculties. For Vasubandhu the relevant list is that of the

> six classes of consciousness (*vijñānakāya*) and he tries to show that the notion of the *pudgala* is incompatible with the teachings in regard to this. The Pudgalavādins, for their part, appear to interpret the objects of the various consciousnesses differently to the *abhidharma* schools known to us and can therefore claim that the person can be perceived by every class of consciousness. Probably they didn't accept the momentariness of such objects, at least not to the extent found in most forms of *abhidharma*.

The same four broad areas of debate are to be found in the critique of the Pudgalavādins in the *Satyasiddhiśāstra*.[15] We find there also the simile of fire and fuel. Similar criticisms of Pudgalavādin views are found in Madhyamaka treatises. Indeed the simile of fire and fuel (or wood) may in fact derive from Nāgārjuna, as the relationship between these two is the subject of one chapter of the *Madhyamakakārikā*.[16] This comparison does not occur in the earliest accounts of Pudgalavādin views.[17] It is, however, referred to in the commentary to the *Kathāvatthu*[18] and, interestingly, in the *Sammatīyanikāyaśāstra*.[19] It is possible that the manner in which it is used by Nāgārjuna suggested to the later Pudgalavādins its applicability to the relationship between the *pudgala* and the aggregates.

The Pudgalavādin sources

The Traidharmakaśāstra

This Pudgalavādin text was translated twice into Chinese. The first translation was made in 382 A.D. by Kumārabuddhi, a monk from the reigning family in Turfan, assisted by several Chinese collaborators. A second translation was made in 391 A.D. by Gautama Saṅghadeva, a monk of Kashmirian origin, and Hui-yüan. The original text of this work does not survive and it is uncertain whether it was written in Sanskrit or some form of Middle Indian. The author's name was Vasubhadra or Giribhadra, but nothing is known of him. However, the contents of the work suggest a date in the early centuries A.D., but no doubt it incorporates material from an earlier Pudgalavādin *Abhidharma-piṭaka*. Both translations incorporate a commentary, in one case with the author named as Saṅghasena — it is not quite clear whether the commentaries to the two translations are from the same or just a very similar original.

The *Traidharmakaśāstra* is a relatively short work (46 leaves, each containing 28 ślokas — we are told.[20]). It is a rather ingenious classification of *abhidharma*, produced by dividing everything into three, subdividing again into three and continuing in this manner. Occasionally this may have forced the author to coin new collective terms and so it is difficult in places to tell whether we are dealing with particular terminology of the Pudgalavādin tradition or simply the special language of this text.

Most of the contents of this work are then a rearrangement of fairly standard

abhidharma type material, somewhat closer to the position of the Vaibhāṣikas than to the Pali tradition, as would be expected in a North Indian tradition.[21] One important passage, however, makes very clear that this is a Pudgalavādin text. After classifying the unskilful under the three headings of wrong behaviour (*duścaritra*), craving and ignorance, the *Traidharmakaśāstra* goes on to subdivide ignorance into lack of knowledge (*ajñāna*), wrong knowledge (views) and doubt. The first of these (ignorance proper) is then defined as lack of knowledge of the conditioned, of the unconditioned and of the indefinable (*avaktavya?*).[22] So here we have one of the four areas of debate explicitly presented.

The text goes on to divide lack of knowledge of the indefinable into three kinds. The first is based upon what is made known by the basis for clinging (*upādāna-prajñapta*) i.e. the soul (*jīva*) which cannot be said to be identical to the aggregates or different to them. This is explicitly related by the commentary to four of the undeclared questions.[23] The second is based upon what is made known by the past (or by the means) i.e. temporal succession from life to life. In other words the relationship between an individual in one life and a subsequent one cannot be defined either in terms of identity or as different, since the one case leads to eternalism and the other to annihilationism. The third kind of ignorance as to the indefinable refers to what is made known by cessation (*nirodhaprajñapta*). This refers to the after-death condition of a Tathāgata where existence, nonexistence, etc. are all specifically ruled out in the undeclared questions.

B. The Sammatīyanikāyaśāstra

Turning now to the *Sammatīyanikāyaśāstra*,[24] a Pudgalavādin text preserved in Chinese translation, we find the four broad areas of debate together with a number of specific issues of textual exegesis. Overall, however, the person of this text seems to be dialectical in nature. Most of the first part of the *śāstra* is concerned with putting detailed arguments both for and against nine propositions:

1. There is no self.
2. Self neither exists nor does not exist.
3. Self exists.
4. The self is the same as the five aggregates.
5. The self is different to the five aggregates.
6. The self is eternal.
7. The self is not eternal.

All of these views are in the end effectively refuted. One example may suffice: If self is absolutely non-existent, there could be no breaking of the five precepts. Even the worst kinds of action would not be wrong. Neither freedom nor bondage would be possible. There could be no doer, no deed and no result and

equally no birth and death (i.e. no suffering). If there is no suffering, it can have no cause. There can therefore be no removal of the cause (i.e. *nirvāṇa*) and no path leading to that removal. Clearly if the four truths are not possible, there can have been no Enlightened Being who proclaimed them. With no Buddha or Dhamma there could be no Ariya-saṅgha, hence no Triple Gem. As Venkataramanan has pointed out, this argument is strikingly reminiscent of chapter XXIV of the *Madhyamakakārikā*.[25]

The impression one receives from this part of the *Sammatīyanikāyaśāstra* is not so much of an attempt to establish a doctrine of a *pudgala* in a positive sense as of a dialectic whose purpose is to undermine rigid views and fixed understandings. It may therefore be the case that we should see the Pudgalavādins as a line of development of Buddhist thought which developed a type of dialectical meditation on the topic of the nature of self. Certainly there is only a very brief attempt to establish their own positive account of the nature of the *pudgala* or *pudgalas*.

Apart from one or two further dilemmas, most of the remainder of the *śāstra* is concerned with the theory of the intermediate existence (*antarābhava*). It is not impossible that this might be part of the original teachings of the Pudgalavādins as it is clearly a topic closely related to the nature of self. This teaching was rejected in the Pali sources, but it was probably accepted almost universally in North India. If the original promoters of the teachings concerning the intermediate existence were the Pudgalavādins, this would not be surprising, since the Pudgalavādin fraternities do not appear to have been present in any numbers in South India and Ceylon.

Critique of the Pudgalavāda

The Vijñānakāya

Turning now to earlier times, we can ask the question as to how far the account of the Pudgalavāda in sources of the first millennium A.D. is representative of an older period. There does not appear to be an extant Pudgalavādin text to which we can attribute a B.C. date with any certainty. However, we do have two significant critiques of the teaching that the person exists in the highest way. The later of these is probably the Vijñānakāya of Devaśarman, one of the seven canonical *abhidharma* texts of the Sarvāstivādins.[26] This is probably a work of the second century B.C.

Despite the considerable lapse of time between this date and the later works so far referred to, we find in the *Vijñānakāya* the same four main areas of debate as we find in the later works: 1. The fourteen unanswered questions; 2. *karma* and rebirth; 3. the conditioned and the unconditioned and 4. the analytical structures. Here the last is naturally represented especially by the *vijñānakāya* themselves, as well as by the process of sense perception more generally.

It is clear that one of the major issues is in fact the status of concepts. If a

person is a mere label for a particular momentary collection of aggregates, then it can be argued that it is essentially irrelevant to the development of wisdom. If, as suggested above, the Pudgalavādins were using meditation on the dilemmas concerning the nature of the person to establish right view (in much the same way as other Buddhist traditions use the dilemmas concerning eternalism/annihilationism or existence/non-existence), then they could not have welcomed such a development and would have had no alternative but to defend some kind of real existence of the person.

Let us illustrate the *Vijñānakāya* debate with one example.[27] The protagonists are the Personalist and the follower of the emptiness teaching (Suññatāvāda). We will call the latter the Voidist. The Personalist asks what is the object of loving-kindness. The Voidist replies that it is the five aggregates given the label of 'being'. The Personalist, not unreasonably, suggests that this is not in harmony with the *suttas* which recommend loving-kindness towards living beings rather than aggregates. The Voidist counters with reference to the six classes of consciousness. The object of visual consciousness is visual form. The cases of hearing, smelling, tasting and touching are similar. The object of mental consciousness is dhammas. In none of these cases would loving-kindness have a being as its object.

It follows therefore that the Personalist must affirm a seventh class of consciousness. The Voidist then argues that this is equivalent to accusing the Buddha of ignorance. The Personalist replies that the Buddha certainly knew it, even if he didn't proclaim it. The Voidist counters with the well-known saying that the Buddha did not have the 'closed fist' of a teacher who holds back some of his teachings from his advanced disciples.[28] The Personalist replies with the equally well-known simile[29] which compares the leaves on a single *siṃsapā* tree with those on the trees of the forest to illustrate the difference between the teachings which the Buddha actually taught and those which he knew but did not teach. However, the Voidist gets the last word by pointing out that the truths which the Buddha knew but did not proclaim were precisely those which were not conducive to following the path to enlightenment. If therefore the person exists, it is not conducive to the path!

This is an effective critique in terms of the Sarvāstivādin *abhidharma*, but probably doesn't address the actual views of the Personalists very accurately. It is unlikely that they taught a seventh class of consciousness whose object is the person. It is much more probable that their teaching was the same as in the later period. They must have held that the person is apprehended by all six classes of consciousness. This is not actually quite as different from the *abhidharma* position as it appears at first sight. Both schools in fact hold that the person is apprehended by all six consciousnesses. The difference is that for the Voidist the person is a label for the aggregates experienced as objects of consciousness whereas for the Personalist the relationship between the person and those objects cannot be described as either the same or different.

Another point of interest in the *Vijñānakāya* is the specific doctrine of the

eight persons (*aṭṭha purisapuggalā*) i.e. the stages of realization or sanctity. The Voidist attempts to use this as the basis for his critique, arguing that this implies that there is more than one person and therefore the person cannot be an unchanging category. The problem with this is that it is open to a Personalist counter, citing the undeclared questions in relation to the existence of the Tathāgata after death.

The Kathāvatthu

Earlier than the *Vijñānakāya* and probably the source for some of its discussion is the *puggalakathā* of the *Kathāvatthu*.[30] I have elsewhere discussed the dating of this work.[31] Here I will simply say that the discussion of the puggala is certainly part of the original core of the *Kathāvatthu*. I believe it to be the work of Moggaliputta Tissa during the reign of the Emperor Asoka Moriya in the third century B.C. This may well bring us back to the time of the Elder Vātsīputra and is in any case no more than a generation later. It is almost certainly our earliest source for this controversy.

There are some difficulties in using the *Kathāvatthu* material to determine the nature of the Pudgalavāda in the earliest period, if we wish to be sure of avoiding the intrusion of later data. The first of these is the question of the status of the commentary. It is clear that the commentaries of all seven canonical *abhidhamma* works are by the same author. Whether this is Buddhaghosa or a close associate is not certain, but in any case it must be a work of the fifth century A.D. in its present form. Like most of the other commentaries of 'Buddhaghosa' it will be a rendering into Pali of an earlier work or works in Sinhala Prakrit and is unlikely to contain much, if anything, of a later date than the second century A.D., perhaps even the first.[32] However, this is still a long time after the third century B.C. While it is likely that some of what the commentary says is based upon an oral tradition brought from India, it is not possible that everything is. Indeed the commentary sometimes attributes views in the *Kathāvatthu* to sects which came into existence long after the time of Moggaliputta Tissa. Often it indicates that this is the case by the use of the word *etarahi* 'nowadays.'[33] Caution is therefore necessary in using the commentary.

The second difficulty lies in the nature of the *Kathāvatthu* itself. It is a text written in a format developed from the oral literature of the early period. In particular it is written for memorization with formulaic repetition of a quite technical kind – often very difficult to interpret without recourse to the commentary. It is in the form of a dialogue in which the second speaker limits himself to the answers 'yes' or 'not so'. In fact the initial first speaker, who is a Vibhajjavādin — the commentary refers to him as the *sakavādin* — subsequently changes place with the initial second speaker, the *paravādin*, for some passages. This is not signalled in the text but is required by the sense and so explained by the commentary. The difficulty lies in the fact that the first speaker sometimes repeats the same question and receives the opposite answer i.e. 'yes' in place of

'not so' or vice versa. This is generally explained by the commentary and usually makes sense, but it is not easy to be sure that the commentary's explanation is what was intended by Moggaliputta Tissa in the third century B.C.

Let us take an example (Kv 32):

Sakavādin *Does the very same person transmigrate from this world to the other world, from the other one to this one?*
Paravādin *Yes.*
Sakavādin *Does he transmigrate without difference and complete?*
Paravādin *Not so.*
Sakavādin *Does he transmigrate without difference and complete?*
Paravādin *Yes.*
Sakavādin *Is one who has lost an arm still without an arm?*
Paravādin *Not so.*

[The same question is asked first of a series of mutilated and diseased persons and then for a series of animals. The answer is of course the same.]

Sakavādin *Does the very same person transmigrate from this world to the other world, from the other one to this one?*
Paravādin *Yes.*
Sakavādin *Does he transmigrate together with the aggregate of materiality?*
Paravādin *Not so.*
Sakavādin *Does he transmigrate together with the aggregate of materiality?*
Paravādin *Yes.*
Sakavādin *Is the soul (jiva) the same as the body?*
Paravādin *Not so.*

[The same sequence is then gone through with each of the other four aggregates, then again with each of the five aggregates asking the question "Does he transmigrate without the aggregate of . . .", but now ending with the question, "Is the soul different to the body?" A similar sequence then follows with the five aggregates themselves ("Does materiality transmigrate?" etc.) and with their negations ("Does materiality not transmigrate?" etc.). Then follows a verse:]

If the person breaks up when the aggregates break up,
it is the annihilationist view which was rejected by the Buddha.
If the person does not break up when the aggregates break up,
the person is eternal and very similar to nibbāna.

Earlier the question "Does the very same person transmigrate from this world to the other world, from the other one to this one?" was answered first with 'not so' but on a second asking it was answered with 'yes'. The commentary has previously explained as follows: The Puggalavādin holds the view that "the person

transmigrates", based upon such sutta passages as "a person after transmigrating seven times at the most" (e.g. S II 185) and speculates (*voharati*) upon that basis. When the *sakavādin* asks the question specifying 'the very same' (*sv' eva*) with the intention of asking if the one who transmigrates according to your view is identical (*eko yeva*) in both this and the other world, the Puggalavādin denies this out of fear of eternalism. When the question is asked again to make it firm (*daḷhaṃ katvā*), he affirms it because it is just that person and not another entity (*bhāva*) — there are such *suttas* as "He perished from there and arose here" (D I 81, etc.).

Returning to the passage translated above, the commentary explains the expression 'without difference' (*anañño*) in the question as meaning 'identical in every respect', while the expression 'complete' (*avigato*) is understood as meaning 'not lacking in one respect'. The question "Does he transmigrate without difference and complete?" is first answered with 'not so' because one who has arisen in the *deva* world is not a human being. Questioned again 'to make it firm', the Puggalavādin agrees because of his view that the very same person transmigrates. All this seems straightforward and no doubt the commentary is correct in its interpretation.

More interesting is the commentary's handling of the next pair of opposite answers to the same question. The question is whether he transmigrates with materiality (and the other four aggregates). In the first case he rejects because there is no going [to the next world] with this material body (*rūpakāya*). In the second case he agrees with reference to the person in the intermediate state.

> "*For in his view the [person in the intermediate state] goes precisely with materiality and enters the mother's womb; then the materiality of that [person in the intermediate state] breaks up.*"

With the next aggregate – feeling (*vedanā*) – the same opposite answers are interpreted slightly differently. The Puggalavādin rejects the proposition that one goes to the other world 'with feeling' with reference to an unconscious rebirth (*asaññūpapatti*), but agrees to it with reference to rebirth other than that.

The *Mūlaṭīkā* subcommentary expands this, pointing out that it should apply to any rebirth immediately after perishing (*cuti*) since [the Puggalavādin] does not teach an intermediate existence for a person going to *niraya*, to the unconscious existence or to the immaterial (*arūpa*) realm.[34] It also points out that it could not apply to those who affirm the existence of consciousness for unconscious beings at the times of conception and death, since they would have an intermediate state. The *Anuṭīkā* in fact comments that this would apply to former *antarābhavavādins* and cites a *pāda* from the *Abhidharmakośa* (III 15) for the contemporary view that a person going to *niraya* does so upside down.[35] It also attributes to some among the Sabbatthivādins the view that unconscious beings experience consciousness at the beginning and end of their life.

What emerges very clearly from this example is that the commentary takes

the discussion of the person as very closely related to discussions of the exact process of rebirth. This is just what we found in the *Sammatīyanikāyaśāstra*. The question is whether the commentary has been influenced by later discussions in its interpretation. For a number of reasons I believe that we should in this case accept its interpretation of the *Kathāvatthu*.

Firstly it is not obvious how one would offer a consistent alternative explanation of the pairs of opposite answers. No doubt the onus would lie on us to offer such an alternative if we wished to dispute the commentary's exegesis. Secondly, it is here, if anywhere, that one would expect an ancient commentarial interpretation to be handed down i.e. precisely where the text does not make sense without one. A third, more general point concerns the basic thesis of the Puggalavādins. Their position is that the person is inexplicable and in any case cannot be seen as occurring apart from the aggregates any more than it can be identified with them. It follows necessarily that the process of rebirth requires a continuous sequence of aggregates. Otherwise there would either be a person existing between rebirths apart from the aggregates or a gap in the continuity of the person. These objections are perhaps not insuperable but it is easy to see the appeal of the notion of a set of aggregates belonging to a being in the intermediate state and providing temporal and spatial continuity between existences.

The structure of the **Kathāvatthu's account**

It can be seen from the kind of material involved here (and even more in the *Sammatīyanikāyaśāstra*) that it is bound to be the case that a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer is often not possible. So there is nothing very surprising in the fact that the *Kathāvatthu* often finds it necessary to avoid straightforward answers too. What is interesting is that the kind of topic that is being addressed here is recognisably related to the kind of material we have already seen.

The *puggalakathā* contains eight chapters. Apart from material of an entirely different kind (e.g. connected with the development of Buddhist logic[36]), it seems that the first chapter is mostly concerned with the 'undeclared questions.' (They are returned to again in chapter five.) Most of chapters two and three are concerned with the analytical structures, as I have called them — in this case, the aggregates, bases, elements and faculties, the basic structural material of the Pali *abhidhamma* texts. Chapter six and a small part of chapter two are concerned with the process of *kamma* and rebirth, while another small part of chapter two is directed at the question as to whether the person is unconditioned or not. Notably the opponent Pudgalavādin is depicted as holding precisely the views found in the later Sammatīya texts: the person is neither in the category of being conditioned nor in that of the unconditioned. Chapter eight mostly deals with *sutta* passages, including some interesting references to the eight persons and to the issue of conditioned or unconditioned. This leaves three chapters unaccounted for, but in fact they are the shortest chapters and amount to less than five pages out of nearly sixty nine (in the PTS edition).

Conclusion

Overall then it looks as if the *Kathāvatthu* is already addressing much the same kind of issue that we find addressed in later polemics against Pudgalavādin views. The difference is, I think, that they were addressing those arguments in a way which suggests that they were actually in living contact with actual Pudgalavādins. The impression one gets while reading Vasubandhu and others is that it is questionable whether they had actually met a Pudgalavādin. This difference is very clear when one looks at the extant Pudgalavādin writings. The Kathāvatthu seems to be much more aware of the sort of arguments which Pudgalavādins actually advance and certainly doesn't seem to be treating the Pudgalavāda as something completely beyond the pale.[37]

Appendix

On the origin of the names Vātsiputriya/Vajjiputtiya and Sāmmatīya/Sāmitiya

At the centre of a sequence of three suttas in the *Majjhima-nikāya* is the figure of an arahat-to-be who is referred to as a wanderer (*paribbājaka*) of the Vaccha clan (Vacchagotta = Vatsagotra or Vātsyagotra).[38] His personal name is not given, but the Buddha always addresses him by the name of Vaccha (= Vātsya or Vātsa or Vatsa). He is a figure of some subsequent importance: he has a verse in the Theragāthā and recurs at the centre of two sections of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*. Of particular interest for our purposes is the middlemost of the three *Majjhima* suttas. The subject of this is the 'undeclared questions' and it takes its name of *Aggi-Vacchagotta-sutta* from the simile in it of fire which exists in dependence upon fuel (*upādāna*) of grass and wood. Similarly the *Vacchagotta-saṃyutta* consists entirely of fifty five short, repetitive suttas in which the Vacchagotta wanderer asks the Buddha about the 'undeclared questions.'[39] Again the *Avyākata-samyutta* — set of linked suttas on the 'undeclared questions' — ends with five suttas in which the same wanderer is featured.[40] One of these again makes use of a simile of fire and fuel (*upādāna*).[41]

Vasubandhu in fact twice quotes from a version of one of these latter suttas, the second time referring to it as the *Vātsya-sūtra*.[42] The wanderer is three times referred to as '*Vatsasagotra parivrājaka*' (or similar) and once (below in a citation which the Vyākhyā says is from Kumāralāta/Kumāralābha) as Vātsya. The former version is probably a mistaken Sanskritization of a Middle Indian form such as *Vacchayagotta < Vātsyagotra with a *svarabhakti* vowel where the Pali form has assimilated the 'y'.

Turning now to the name of the school which Vasubandhu refers to as the Vātsīputrīyas, this must certainly be the school which the *Dīpavaṃsa* and other Pali sources know as the Vajjiputtakas. This name is surprising and is usually explained by confusion with the Vajjiputtakas defeated at the second communal

recitation.[43] However, they are clearly distinguished, with one connected to the Mahāsaṅghikas and the other treated as a branching from the Theravāda. Probably the reading of Vajjiputtiya[44] for the Pudgalavādin school is the correct one, although a later Pali source refers to the school as the Vacchiputtakā.[45] The confusion is probably quite recent and due to the similarity of Vajjiputtaka (= Vṛjiputraka) and Vajjiputtiya.

In sources using classical Sanskrit (none of the surviving ones are particularly early) we find Vatsīputrīya or Vātsīputrīya. The latter, at least, clearly takes the underlying Middle Indian form as derived from the name of its founder i.e. the son of the Vatsa woman. Since the eponymous ancestor of the Vatsas could no doubt be identified with the sage who is the eponymous source of the *gotra* name, we therefore get various legendary stories which can play a part. It is clear, however, from some of the legendary explanations which attempt to explain the name by means of the future stem *vatsy-* that a form of the name such as *Vatsyaputrīya was also current. This must come from an alternative Sanskritization of the Middle Indic form.[46]

There is only one epigraphic source. An addition to the pillar of Asoka at Sarnath in characters similar to those in early Gupta records refers to Sammitiya teachers as 'Vātsīputrīkānāṃ.' The heavily Sanskritized nature of this makes it difficult to know the exact underlying form.

What is clear is that there are at least three plausible interpretations of the origin of the name of this school. It could, as implied by E.J. Thomas, be simply a school which drew its origins among the Vatsas.[47] Most probably, in view of the evidence cited above, it derives from Vātsīputra as the name of a famous monk (either the son of a woman from Vatsa or the son of a woman of the corresponding *gotra*). It is also possible that it is a school which took its inspiration from the teachings of the *arahat* Vaccha/Vātsya. At all events because of the similarity of the teachings of this school and the issues raised in the canonical sources which mention this *arahat*, there has clearly been a tendency to connect the two.

Later Sanskrit sources generally refer to what seems to be the most influential branch of the Vātsīputrīyas as either Sāmmatīya or Sāmmitīya. It is clear that these forms of the name are derived from a Sanskritization associated with the popular etymology that derives the name of this fraternity from its putative founder: Sammita or Sammata. Other explanations are possible, based on some derivative of *saṃmita-*, *saṃmata-* or even *svamata-*.[48]

More likely now is a derivation from *samiti-* 'assembly' or 'council'. This school would then be the followers of the Council. Presumably there were other Vātsīputrīyas who did not accept the authority of this council. This gains considerable plausibility from the account of the five councils of this school preserved in a Tibetan source.[49] Furthermore Bhavya gives Avantaka as a synonym for this school, deriving from their having held a council in Avanti.[50]

Pali sources refer normally to either Samitiyā or Sammitiyā, but Mss. have some other variations.[51] The metre of the *Dīpavaṃsa* reference requires that the first syllable be long.[52] Even earlier than this is an inscription in perfectly

preserved letters on a stone slab reclaimed from a well in Mathurā which recalls the installation of an image of a 'bodhisatvo' in the Sirivihāra: "... *ācariyāna Samitiyāna parigrahe sarva-Buddha-pujāye*."[53] This would date from about the second century A.D. Since the inscription from the early Gupta period cited above may also have -i- in the second syllable, we should probably assume that in the early period the form of this name would be written Samitiya but intending a long first syllable. The Sanskrit form should then be: Sāmitīya.

Notes

* Presented on 8 February 1990 in Bangkok, Thailand, at the First International Conference 'Buddhism into the Year 2000', hosted by the Dhammakāya Foundation.

1 See the substantial volumes edited by Heinz Bechert: *The Dating of the Historical Buddha. Die Datierung des historischen Buddha*, Parts I and II, Göttingen, 1991–2, Part III to appear shortly.

2 See for some of the issues the preface and papers to: David Seyfort Ruegg and Lambert Schmithausen, *Earliest Buddhism and Madhyamaka*, (Vol. II of Johannes Bronkhorst, *Panels of the VIIth World Sanskrit Conference*). Leiden, 1990.

3 Étienne Lamotte. *History of Indian Buddhism*. From the Origins to the Śaka Era, Louvain, 1988, pp. 523–28 provides a useful summary of the older data.

4 In some cases they may simply be less well-known names of a school otherwise known to us by a different name.

5 See L.S. Cousins. "The 'Five Points' and the Origins of the Buddhist Schools." T. Skorupski, *The Buddhist Forum*. Vol. II. London, 1991, pp. 27–60.

6 Several articles have been produced on the Pudgalavāda by Ven. Thích Thien Châu, but more unpublished information is still to be found in his: *Les sectes personnalistes (pudgalavādin) du Bouddhisme ancien*. Thèse pour le doctorat d'état ès-lettres et sciences humaines, Université de la Sorbonne nouvelle (Paris III), 1977 (cited as Chau, *Thesis*). See: "Le personnalisme du Bouddhisme ancien ICO, 1973; "The Literature of the Pudgalavādins", *JIABS*, 1984, 7–16; "Les Réponses des Pudgalavādin aux Critiques des Écoles Bouddhiques", *JIABS*, 1987, 33–53. For other work on the Pudgalavādins see: P. Skilling. "The Samskrtāsamskṛta-Viniścaya of Daśabalaśrīmitra", BSR, 1987, 3–23. Louis de La Vallée Poussin, (English translation by Leo Pruden), *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*, Berkeley, 1990, Vol. IV, chapter 9, especially pp. 1356 ff.; S. Schayer, "Kamalasīla's Kritik des Pudgalavāda". RO, 1932, 68–93; Mervyn Sprung, *Lucid Exposition of the Middle Way*, London, 1979, chapters X and XI, esp. pp. 125 ff. and 142 f.; Peter G. Fenner, "A reconstruction of the Madhyama kāvatāra's Analysis of the Person," JIABS (1983) pp. 7–34; Stefan Anacker, Seven Works of Vasubandhu, Delhi, 1984, pp. 96–100; Ganganatha Jha, *The Tattvasaṅgraha of Shāntarakṣita with the Commentary of Kamalashīla*. Delhi, 1937 (repr. 1986) Vol. I pp. 217–28. For further references, see: Étienne Lamotte. *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse*, Louvain, 1949, Vol. I p. 43 n.3.

7 At the time of the visit of the Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsang we are told that they numbered some 66,500 out of a total saṅgha of about 254,000. This figure is probably misleading, however, for several reasons. Hsüan-tsang did not visit the south where non-Pudgalavādin schools were strong and he probably understates their numbers. It is also likely that the strength of the Sammatīya school was unusually great at this point in time due to the patronage of the Emperor Harsa and his family. Note that Hsüan-tsang is probably using Sammatīya as a collective designation for all branches of the Pudgalavāda.

8 From the Sanskrit: James Duerlinger, "Vasubandhu's 'Refutation of the Theory of Selfhood' (*Ātmavādapratiṣedha*)." JIP 17.2 (1989) pp. 129–87 (erratum in JIP 17.3 p. 327): cf. the same writer's "Vasubandhu on the Vātsīputrīyas' fire-fuel analogy," *Philosophy East and West* 32 (1982) pp. 151–158. From the Chinese and Tibetan, but well-annotated and still very valuable: La Vallée Poussin. op. cit.

9 Ms. Vatsīputrīyāḥ. The *Vyākhyā* glosses this as equivalent to: 'Āryasāmmatīyāḥ. This certainly reflects a later stage when the Sammatīya school was the most numerous and influential exemplar of one of the four major traditions of later Indian Buddhism. However, it may also be literally correct. See n. 11 below.

10 Peter Skilling has shown that the tradition of the Sammitīya school of Pudgalavāda held that this took place "four hundred years after the Parinirvāṇa of the Tathāgata", but it is not sure what date they had adopted for the Buddha's *parinibbāna*. There is some reason to suggest that they may have had a relatively early date for this. See: Peter Skilling, "History and tenets of the Sāmmatīya school," *Linh-Són* 19 (1982) pp. 38–52.

11 H. Lüders, "A List of Brahmi Inscriptions," Appendix to *Epigraphia Indica* X, Calcutta, 1912: Nos. 654–64; 680; 682.

12 There is no reason to suppose that the name Vātsīputrīya became the property of only one of these later fraternities. No doubt each of the four later branches of this tradition considered themselves to be the authentic Vātsīputrīyas. Probably whichever you asked you could get a list consisting of the Vātsīputrīyas and three or so others — in other words the name of the school from which the list came could be precisely the one omitted. This certainly accounts for some of the variation in the Tibetan sources. In this situation Yaśomitra is no doubt right to use the term Āryasāmmatīya as equivalent to Vātsīputrīya, since the term Ārya- is precisely used to indicate one of the four major Buddhist traditions recognised in later Indian sources. This of course is just what the term Vātsīputrīya meant in the earlier period. In fact I am not completely confident that there were ever more than three Pudgalavādin fraternities — Sammatīyas proper, Dhammuttarīyas and Bhadrāyaṇīyas. All our data could be reconciled with this if it is assumed that Avantaka and Kaurukullaka/Kurukula are names for two (or one) of these and additions have sometimes been made to get the number of fraternities up to eighteen. In fact, however, it is more likely that Kurukula is simply a version of Kaukkuṭika (Pali Gokulika), in fact a Mahāsaṇghika fraternity. (This school is referred to as Kakatika in an inscription at Mathurā — H. Lüders, *Mathurā Inscriptions*, Göttingen, 1961, p. 102.)

13 This example is also in the discussion in Vasubandhu's Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa (Anacker, op. cit., p. 98).

14 The Pudgalavādins became known for adopting the position that an issue was 'undeclared'. At all events, in the *Abhidharmadīpa* they are specifically cited as holding in relation to the question of the existence of past and future dharmas that it was an undeclared matter. Abhidh-dīp 258: *Paudgalikasyāpi avyākṛtavastuvādinaḥ pudgalo 'pi dravyato 'stīti*. Their position is subsequently considered to amount to that of the Jains (°*nagnāṭapakṣe*) i.e. the *śyādvāda*. Terms such as *avaktavya*- or *avācya(tā)* are commonly used in discussions of their views e.g. *Prasannapadā* (ed. Louis de La Vallée Poussin, repr. Osnabrück, 1970) p. 64 n.3 and 283 n.4.

15 N.A. Sastri, *Satyasiddhiśāstra of Harivarman*, Baroda, 1978, II pp. 69–74.

16 *Madhyamakakārikā*, chapter X.

17 The *Kathāvatthu* gives the similes of tree/shadow, village/villager; kingdom/king and bolt/jailor. Nāgrjuna has as well as fire/fuel the two similes of pot and cloth, both subsequently to be clichés of philosophical literature. The commentarial tradition of the Mādhyamikas develops this — see, for example, the works of Sprung and Fenner cited above. Also cited here is the example of an employer and his employees which

seems closer to the examples given in the *Kathāvatthu* (Fenner. op. cit., p. 11). Chau (Thesis p. 200) cites a Chinese source (critical of the notion of the *pudgala*) as giving the similes of owner and house, light and lamp; space and things, as well as fire and wood. The *Sammatīyanikāyaśāstra* (p. 182) also uses milk and its colour, cf. Abhidh-k-bh 463 (milk or water).

18 Kv-a 27 f.

19 K. Venkataramanan, "Sāmmitītīyanikāya Śástra", *VBA*, 1953, pp. 182 and 186.

20 Chau, *Thesis*, p. 105. For a translation into English of a portion of this text, see: Leon Hurvitz, "The road to Buddhist salvation as described by Vasubhadra," *JAOS* 87 (1967) pp. 434–86.

21 Note for example the following (page references to Chau, *Thesis*): *avijñapti* (p. 56 n. and p. 106); twelve *dhūtaguṇa* (p. 60); the different kinds of sexuality of *devas* in the heavens of the *kāmadhātu* (p. 90); *antarābhava* (p. 114); the falling away of *arhats* (p. 115); the *dhyānāntara* (p. 121). In particular, the description of the stages of insight prior to the *darśanabhūmi* (p. 61) looks like a development of the fourfold *nirvedhabhāgiya* (skilful roots) of the Vaibhāṣika tradition.

22 Chau, *Thesis*, p. 80.

23 Ibid. p. 117.

24 Venkataramanan, op. cit. This text was translated into Chinese in the fourth or fifth century A.D., if not earlier.

25 Ibid. p. 223 n. 39.

26 Louis de La Vallée Poussin, "La controverse du temps et du pudgala dans le Vijñānakāya", *Études Asiatiques publiées à l'occasion du vingt-cinquième anniversaire de l'Ëcole Française d'Extrême-orient*, Paris, 1925, Vol. I pp. 343–75.

27 Ibid p. 366 ff.

28 D II 100; S V 153.

29 S V 437 f.

30 Kv 1–69.

31 L.S. Cousins, op. cit., p. 34 ff.

32 There may of course have been earlier renderings into Pali (or even Sanskrit) of such material. The *Vimuttimagga* must bear some such relationship to the *Visuddhimagga*. Compare also the relationship between the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvaṃsa* and between the *Peṭakopadesa* and the *Nettipakaraṇa*.

33 L.S. Cousins, op. cit., p. 33 n.34.

34 The *Traidharmakaśāstra* denies *antarābhava* for the *arūpa* realm — Chau, *Thesis*, p. 114.

35 Kv-anuṭ (Be 1977) 79 (cf. n. 1): *uddhaṃpādo tu nārako ti*.

36 On this, see Fumimaro Watanabe, *Philosophy and its Development in the Nikāyas and Abhidhamma*, Delhi, 1983.

37 In fact the attitude of later writers seems to be ambivalent. So for example Yaśomitra: *na hi Vātsīputrīyāṇāṃ mokṣo neṣyate, Bauddhatvāt* — "for liberation is not denied for the Vātsīputrīyas since they are Buddhists." Abhidh-k-bh-vy (edited D. Shastri, Benares, 1973) Part IV p. 1161.

38 M I 481–497.

39 S III 257–263.

40 S IV 391–403.

41 S IV 399. For this usage, see CPD II s.v.upādāna 1.

42 Abhidh-k bh p. 470 and p. 471. The *sutta* referred to is designated in the Pali sources as either Ānando or Atth'attā (vll. Attanto and Atthanto), whereas the name Vaccha or Vacchagotta is sometimes given to the first of the five *suttas* which feature this wanderer. In fact, however, it is clear that the names of *suttas* often remained rather fluid until a very late date.

43 A similar confusion in a Chinese source is discussed by André Bareau: "Une confusion entre Mahāsaṅghika et Vātsīputrīya," JA (1953) pp. 399–406.
44 This is found in some manuscripts of Kv-a (Ee 1979) p. 37 and at Mhv 5.
45 Moh 258.
46 On the origin of the name Vātsīputrīya, see: Paul Demiéville, "L'origine des sectes bouddhiques d'après Paramārtha," in *Choix d'Ëtudes Bouddhiques*, Leiden, 1973, p. 57 n.; André Bareau, "Trois Traités sur les sectes bouddhiques ...", JA (1956) p. 169.
47 E.J. Thomas, *History of Buddhist Thought*, pp. 38–39 nn.
48 So D.R. Bhandarkar, CII Vol. IV *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings*, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 141–142; 292.
49 Peter Skilling, *History and Tenets ...*, (cited above n. 10).
50 Bareau, op. cit., p. 170.
51 e.g. to Mhv V 7. Moh 259 has Sammitīyā.
52 Dip V 46. The line ends: ... *ca Sammiti*.
53 J.Ph. Vogel, *Epigraphia Indica* VIII pp. 71–72.

23

COSMOLOGY AND MEDITATION

From the *Aggañña-Sutta* to the Mahāyāna*

Rupert Gethin

Source: *History of Religions* 36, 3 (1997): 183–217.

The significance of Buddhist cosmology

> Now there comes a time, Vāseṭṭha, when after a long period of time this world contracts. When the world contracts beings are for the most part born in the realm of Radiance. There they exist made of mind, feeding on joy, self-luminous, moving through the air, constantly beautiful; thus they remain for a long, long time. Now there comes a time, Vāseṭṭha, when after a long period of time this world expands. When the world expands beings for the most part fall from the realm of Radiance and come here [to this realm]; and they exist made of mind, feeding on joy, self-luminous, moving through the air, constantly beautiful; thus they remain for a long, long time.[1]

This striking and evocative passage introduces the well-known account of the evolution of the world and human society found in the Aggaññasutta of the Pāli Dīgha Nikāya.[2] It marks the beginning of a particular line of thought within Buddhist tradition concerning the world and its cycles of expansion and contraction. It is this line of thought that I wish to investigate in the present article.

It can sometimes seem that, as "literate, demythologized and Aristotelianized academics"—to borrow a characterization from G. S. Kirk[3]—we become peculiarly insensitive to the kind of poetic and imaginative world which, for perhaps most human beings for most of human history, has constituted "reality." It is perhaps not an accident then that, despite the fact that certain studies of contemporary Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand have drawn attention to the importance of the traditional cosmology to the worldview of present-day Theravāda Buddhists,[4] the subject of Buddhist cosmology has received relatively little attention from textual scholars.[5] Significantly, one of the few works devoted to Buddhiṣt cosmology to be published in more recent years is not a study of ancient Pāli or Sanskrit sources but a translation of a fourteenth-

century Thai classic, Phya Lithai's *Traibhūmikathā* or *Thrai Phum Phra Ruang* ("Three Worlds according to King Ruang").[6]

The overall paucity of scholarly materials dealing with Buddhist cosmology would seem to reflect a reluctance on the part of modern scholarship to treat this dimension of Buddhist thought as having any serious bearing on those fundamental Buddhist teachings with which we are so familiar: the four noble truths, the eightfold path, no-self, dependent arising, and so on. The effect of this is to divorce the bare doctrinal formulations of Buddhist thought from a traditional mythic context. This can result in serious distortions: the picture that has sometimes been painted of especially early Buddhism and Theravāda Buddhism is somewhat one-dimensional and flat. However, the principle that the study of the imagery employed in early Buddhist texts is a useful way of deepening our understanding of the more overtly conceptual teachings of the Nikāyas has already been used to good purpose by Steven Collins in his discussion of house imagery, vegetation imagery, and water imagery in the context of the Nikāyas' presentation of the teaching of "no-self."[7] Advocating an approach not dissimilar to Collins's, Stanley Tambiah has commented that the traditional Buddhist cosmological scheme "says figuratively and in terms of metaphorical images the same kind of thing which is stated in abstract terms in the doctrine. The basic doctrinal concepts of Buddhism . . . which are alleged to explain man's predicament and to direct his religious action, are also embedded in the cosmology (and its associated pantheon)."[8] It seems to me that in this he can only be right, and one of the things I will do in this article is to explore further the relationship in Buddhist thought between the realms of abstract theory, on the one hand, and cosmological myth, on the other. To ignore the mythic portions of ancient Buddhist texts is to fail in a significant way to enter into their thought-world. My particular focus will be certain cosmological ideas concerning the expansion and contraction of the universe and their implications for our understanding of the nature and significance of the fourth "meditation" (*jhāna/dhyāna*) in the account of the stages of the Buddhist path as presented in the Nikāyas and Abhidharma. What also emerges, I will argue, is a clearer perspective on the development of certain ideas usually considered characteristic of certain strands of Mahāyāna Buddhist thought: the *tathāgatagarbha* and an idealist ontology.

Cosmology in the Nikāyas and Abhidharma

The Nikāyas and Āgamas contain very many cosmological details, but it is not until the period of the Abhidharma that we get attempts to organize these details into a systematic whole. Yet what Masson's and Marasinghe's studies of "gods" in the Nikāyas reveal is that, notwithstanding the fact that the Nikāyas nowhere give a systematic exposition of their cosmology,[9] all the basic principles and not a few of the details of the developed cosmology of the Abhidharma are to be found scattered throughout the Nikāyas.[10] I reckon the basic principles to be three. First, there are a number of different realms of existence that constitute a

hierarchy; there are lower realms—the realms of animals (*tiracchānayoni*) and of hungry ghosts (*pettivisaya*) and various hells (*niraya*); there is the realm of men (*manussa*) and, above, the various heaven realms of the *devas* and *brahmās*.[11] Second, beings are continually reborn in these various realms in accordance with their actions—the ten unskillful (*akusala*) courses of action (*kammapatha*) lead to rebirth in one of the lower realms, and the ten skillful (*kusala*) courses of action lead to rebirth as a human being or in the lower heavens, while meditation attainments (*jhāna*) lead to rebirth in the higher heavens as a *brahmā*.[12] The third principle is that which is inherent in the formula from the Aggañña-sutta that I quoted above. The various levels of existence arrange themselves in "world-systems" (*loka-dhātu*); there are innumerable world-systems which all expand and contract across vast expanses of time.[13] This basic cosmological scheme is not confined to one isolated Nikāya context; it is something alluded to and assumed by very many of the Nikāya formulas. It is perhaps most conveniently summed up in the well-known formula which states that the Buddha, "having himself fully understood and directly experienced this world with its *devas*, its Māra and Brahmā, this generation with its *samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas*, with its princes and peoples, makes it known."[14]

What I want to argue below does not hinge on establishing that the Buddha himself or the earliest phase of Buddhist thought subscribed to this specific cosmological view; I am concerned with how the tradition read the texts as a coherent whole rather than with their relative chronology and evolution. But I would add that I can see no particular reason for thinking that this basic conception of the universe does not belong to the earlier strata of the Nikāyas. There are no a priori historical grounds for regarding the principles of this cosmology as improbable in the mouth of the Buddha; as Marasinghe has commented, "From a study of the Jain, Ājīvika, and the Buddhist ideas of cosmological thinking, it may be surmised that, by the time of the Buddha, there was a rich floating mass of cosmological ideas in the Gangetic regions from which most religious teachers drew quite freely."[15]

On the evidence of the Ṛg-Veda, Upaniṣads, and Jain sources such cosmological ideas might easily have been borrowed and adapted from the cultural milieu in which we understand the Buddha to have formulated his teachings. But this is perhaps to put it too negatively. In many respects the kind of cosmology that I have indicated above seems actually fundamental to Buddhist thought. On the evidence of the Nikāyas (and apparently the Chinese Āgamas) we know of no Buddhism or Buddha that did not teach a belief in rebirth, or conceive of rebirth as fluid among different realms, whether animal, hellish, human, or heavenly.[16] While certain of the details of the Aggañña-sutta's account of the evolution of human society may be, as Gombrich has persuasively argued, satirical in intent, there is nothing in the Nikāyas to suggest that these basic cosmological principles that I have identified should be so understood; there is nothing to suggest that the Aggañña-sutta's introductory formula describing the expansion and contraction of the world is merely a joke.[17] We should surely expect early Buddhism and indeed the Buddha to have some specific ideas about the nature of the round

of rebirth, and essentially this is what the cosmological details presented in the Aggañña-sutta and elsewhere in Nikāyas constitute. They represent a concretized and mythic counterpart to the more abstract formulation of, say, dependent arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*).

What functions do the various levels of existence and the gods play in the Nikāyas? There is no one simple answer to this question, but I shall answer initially by stating more fully what I identified above as the second principle of Buddhist cosmology, namely, that particular kinds of action of body, speech, and mind lead to certain kinds of rebirth. The passages I referred to in this connection effectively draw up a hierarchy of *kamma* that corresponds very closely to the hierarchy of levels of existence. At the bottom of this hierarchy we have unskillful *kammas* leading to rebirth in the realms of hell, hungry ghosts, and animals; next we have the skillful *kammas* of generosity (*dāna*) and the precepts (*sīla*) practiced to various degrees and leading to rebirth as a human being or as a *deva* in one of six realms of heaven; finally the practice of meditation (*bhāvanā*) and the development of the various *jhānas* leads to rebirth among "the gods of Brahmā's retinue" (*brahmakāyikā devā*) and beyond. At this point we should remind ourselves that *kamma* is for the Nikāyas—as for Buddhist thought generally—at root a mental act or intention; acts of body and speech are performed in response to and conditioned by the quality of the underlying intention or will (*cetanā*); they are unskillful or skillful because they are motivated by unskillful or skillful intentions.[18] Acts of body and speech are, as it were, the epiphenomena of particular kinds of mentality; they are driven by specific psychological states. In a very real sense acts of body and speech are acts of will. Thus the hierarchy is essentially one of certain kinds of mentality (understood as *kamma*) being related to certain levels of existence; this is most explicit in the case of the various *jhānas* and Brahma realms. This way of thinking demonstrates the general principle of an equivalence or parallel in Buddhist thought between psychology on the one hand and cosmology on the other.

Many of the stories about *devas* from different heavens in the Nikāyas lend themselves very readily to a kind of "psychological" interpretation, that is, to interpretation in terms of certain mental states; in certain contexts this interpretation is explicit in the texts themselves. In the *vana-saṃyutta* of the Saṃyutta Nikāya there is a whole series of accounts of *devas* visiting *bhikkhus* dwelling in the forest in order to admonish the *bhikkhus* for their laziness.[19] Here the *devas* serve to arouse skillful states of mind in the *bhikkhu* that spur him on in his practice. Similarly in the *Māra-* and *Bhikkhunī-saṃyuttas* Māra is represented as appearing on the scene and tempting *bhikkhus*, *bhikkhunīs*, and the Buddha, with the world of the five senses.[20] Here then Māra appears to act as the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) which are precisely the mental states that one must overcome in order to attain *jhāna*, and it is precisely *jhāna* that—at least according to a later understanding—takes one temporarily beyond the world of the five senses and out of Māra's reach.[21] To read these texts in loosely psychological terms is not, I think, to engage in acts of gratuitous "demythologizing"; the Buddhist tradition itself at an

early date was quite capable of demythologizing—so much so that one hesitates to use such a term in this context. It is rather, I think, that this kind of psychological interpretation was for the Nikāyas inherent in the material itself. When questioned as to the nature of Māra, the Buddha responds in abstract terms that have to do with general psychological experience: "One says, 'Māra! Māra!' lord. Now to what extent, lord, might Māra or the manifestation of Māra exist?' 'Where the eye exists, Samiddhi, where visible forms, eye consciousness and *dhammas* cognizable by the eye exist, there Māra or the manifestation of Māra exist.' "[22]

Again the *Suttanipāta* defines the armies of Māra that assault the Bodhisatta in what are essentially psychological terms:

> 435. Dwelling thus having attained the highest experience, my mind has no regard for sensual desires. See the purity of a being.
> 436. Sensual desire is called your [Māra's] first army, discontent your second; your third is called hunger and thirst, your fourth craving.
> 437. Your fifth is called tiredness and sleepiness, your sixth fear. Your seventh is doubt, deceit and obstinacy your eighth . . .
> 439. Namuci, this is your army—the attacking (force) of the Dark One [Māra]. Not being a hero one does not conquer it, but having conquered it one gains happiness.[23]

In the Saṃyutta Nikāya, the daughters of Māra too are presented as having a similar psychological reality: "Then Craving, Discontent, and Lust, the daughters of Māra, approached the Blessed One [the Buddha]. Having approached they spoke thus to the Blessed One: 'Ascetic, we would serve at your feet.' Now the Blessed One paid no attention, since he was freed in the unsurpassable, complete destruction of attachments."[24] It is surely to read nothing into these texts to say that the descriptions of the Bodhisatta's/Buddha's encounter with Māra's armies and daughters represent vivid descriptions of the psychology of the Buddha before and after his awakening. The Bodhisatta/Buddha has wrestled with certain mental states—Māra, his armies, his daughters—and defeated them. That is to say, particular psychological states are described in terms of an encounter with beings with cosmological significance—or vice versa.[25]

I do not wish, however, to suggest that a psychological interpretation of such figures as Māra is the whole story. I am not claiming that all ancient readers or hearers of these "texts" would have conceived of Māra's daughters and armies simply as mystic symbols of particular mental states. No doubt for many, Māra, his daughters, and his armies would have had a reality as autonomous beings apart from their own mental states. I do want to claim, however, that a psychological interpretation would have made sense to the authors and readers of these texts. Yet in making such a claim I do not wish to imply that a psychological reading somehow reveals the "true" and "real" significance of the various cosmological beings—the significance intended by the Buddha but which the Buddhist tradition had to compromise in the face of popular belief, and which we in

the late twentieth century are at last privileged to access. The Buddhism of the Nikāyas embraces the notion of rebirth, and the account of different realms of existence occupied by a variety of beings is integral to that. The categories of "mythic symbol" and "literally true" are modern and are bound up with a complex ontology that has been shaped by a particular intellectual and cultural tradition. Thus to approach what, for the want of a better term, *we* call the mythic portions of the Nikāyas with the attitude that such categories as "mythic symbol" and "literally true" are absolutely opposed is to adopt an attitude that is out of time and place. It seems to me that in some measure we must allow both a literal and a psychological interpretation. Both are there in the texts.

The equivocation between cosmology and psychology is particularly clear in a passage of the Kevaddha-sutta.[26] The Buddha tells of a certain *bhikkhu* who wished to discover where the four great elements (*mahābhūta*) ceased without remainder (*aparisesā nirujjhanti*). It seems that we must understand this as wishing to know the full extent of the conditioned world—both physical and mental. The *bhikkhu* appears to have been a master of meditation, for we are told that he attained a state of concentration in which the path leading to the gods appeared to his concentrated mind ("tathārūpaṃ samādhiṃ samāpajji yathā samāhite citte deva-yāniyo maggo pāturahosi"). He then proceeds to approach the gods of ever higher levels to pose his question until eventually he finds himself in the presence of Mahābrahmā himself, who confesses that he cannot answer the question and suggests that he return to the Buddha to put this question to him. The Buddha answers that the four elements cease, not "out there" in some remote outpost of the universe, but in "consciousness" (*viññāṇa*).[27] This account states very clearly how specific psychological states—in this instance, the mind concentrated in the various levels of meditation—give access to particular cosmological realms. Thus the *bhikkhu* is explicitly described as at once making a journey through various levels of the cosmos and making an inner, spiritual journey—a journey of the mind.

In the light of an extremely suggestive article by Peter Masefield, it seems that instead of being misled into searching for meaning in terms of the categories of literal truth and mythic symbol, we should understand the Nikāyas' reference both to a cosmic hierarchy of beings (humans, *devas* and *brahmās*) and to a psychological hierarchy of mental states (levels of *jhāna*) as paralleling the Upaniṣadic categories of "with reference to the gods" (*adhidaivatam*) and "with reference to the self" (*adhyātmam*): that is, "reality" may be viewed either from the perspective of an exterior world (*brahman*) or from the perspective of an interior world (*ātman*) that are in *some* sense—though, in the case of Buddhist thought, *not* an absolutist metaphysical one—the same.[28] Thus Masefield suggests that to talk or conceive of Māra as a cosmic entity on the one hand and as psychological forces on the other is essentially to shift from the *adhidaivatam* to the *adhyātmam* perspective.[29] I am persuaded that Masefield has indeed identified here a way of thinking that runs very deep in the Indian philosophical tradition, and while the importance of this way of thinking may be acknowledged

in the context of the Vedas and Hindu and Buddhist tantra, it is insufficiently understood in the context of early Buddhism.

Turning from the Nikāyas to the Abhidharma, two full systematic accounts of Buddhist cosmology survive: that of the Theravādin Abhidhamma and that of the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma. These two accounts are remarkably similar in broad outline and in fact also agree on many points of detail. This again suggests that the basic cosmology should be regarded as having been formulated relatively early since it forms part of the common heritage of ancient Buddhism. In what follows, I shall be drawing on both the Pāli Theravādin traditions and also, at points, Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakośa for the traditions of the Sarvāstivādins.

One of the general concerns of the Abhidharma is to provide a detailed and complex hierarchy of consciousness. The classic Theravāda scheme of eighty-nine or 121 "consciousnesses" (*citta*) begins with unskillful consciousnesses at the bottom, followed by consciousnesses that concern the mechanics of bare awareness of the objects of the five senses, and then by skillful sense-sphere consciousnesses; next come the various formsphere and formless-sphere consciousnesses that constitute the *jhānas*, or meditation attainments; finally, we have the world-transcending (*lokuttara*) consciousnesses that constitute the mind at the moment of awakening itself.[30] The basic structure of this hierarchy of consciousness parallels quite explicitly the basic structure of the cosmos: consciousness belongs to the sense sphere (*kāmâvacara*), the form sphere (*rūpâvacara*), or the formless sphere (*arūpâvacara*); beings exist in the sense world (*kāma-dhātu, kāma-loka*), the form world (*rūpa-dhātu, rūpa-loka*), or the formless world (*arūpa-dhātu, arūpa-loka*). As well as laying down a more precise hierarchy of consciousness, the Abhidhamma also finalized the structure of the cosmos: both Theravādin and northern sources detail thirty-one basic realms.[31] The basic structure of this cosmos, along with its psychological parallel, is set out in Figure 1.

In detailing the types of consciousness that beings reborn in particular realms are able to experience, the Abhidhamma provides a further indication of the parallel between the psychological order and the cosmological order.[32] Beings in the lowest realms (hell beings, animals, hungry ghosts, Asuras) can only experience sense-sphere consciousness; beings in the human realm and the heavens of the sense sphere characteristically experience sense-sphere consciousness but can in special circumstances (i.e., when attaining *jhāna*) experience form-sphere and formless-sphere consciousness. Beings in the form and formless worlds characteristically experience form and sense-sphere consciousness respectively; both may experience certain forms of both skillful and unskillful sense-sphere consciousness, but not those associated with hatred and unpleasant feeling.[33] The logic governing this arrangement is as follows: A being in one of the lower realms must experience at least a modicum of skillful consciousness or else, never being able to generate the skillful *kamma* necessary to condition rebirth in a higher realm, he or she is stuck there forever. Similarly,

COSMOLOGY					PSYCHOLOGY	
WORLD (*dhātu*)		REALM (*bhūmi*)		LIFE SPAN	MENTAL STATE (*citta*) (karma leading to rebirth in corresponding realm)	
FORMLESS WORLD (*arūpadhātu*)		Neither Consciousness nor Unconsciousness (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*)		84,000 aeons	Formless attainments (*arūpa-samāpatti*)	FORMLESS-SPHERE MIND (*arūpāvacara*)
		Nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*)		60,000 aeons		
		Infinite Consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*)		40,000 aeons		
		Infinite Space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*)		20,000 aeons		
WORLD OF PURE FORM (*rūpadhātu*)		The Supreme (*akaniṭṭha*)	PURE ABODES (*suddhāvāsa*)	16,000 aeons	Path of non-return (*anāgāmi-magga*) or transcendent 4th *jhāna*; Fourth *jhāna*	FORM-SPHERE MIND (*rūpāvacara*)
		The Clear-sighted (*sudassin*)		8,000 aeons		
		The Lovely (*sudassa*)		4,000 aeons		
		The Serene (*atappa*)		2,000 aeons		
		The Durable (*aviha*)		1,000 aeons		
		Unconscious Beings (*asañña-satta*)		500 aeons	asañña-samāpatti; Fourth *jhāna*	
		Great Reward (*vehapphala*)		500 aeons	Ordinary 4th *jhāna*; Fourth *jhāna*	
	⇑ destruction by wind	Complete Beauty (*subha-kiṇha*)		64 aeons	Third *jhāna*	
		Boundless Beauty (*appamāṇa-subha*)		32 aeons		
		Limited Beauty (*paritta-subha*)		16 aeons		
	⇑ destruction by water	Streaming Radiance (*ābhassara*)		8 aeons	Second *jhāna*	
		Boundless Radiance (*appamāṇābha*)		4 aeons		
		Limited Radiance (*parittābha*)		2 aeons		
	⇑ destruction by fire	Great Brahmā (*mahābrahmā*)		1 aeon	First *jhāna*	
		Brahmā's Ministers (*brahma-purohita*)		½ aeon		
		Brahmā's Retinue (*brahma-pārisajja*)		⅓ aeon		
WORLD OF THE FIVE SENSES (*kāmadhātu*)		The masters of the creations of others (*paranimmita-vasavattin*)	HAPPY DESTINIES (*sugati*)	128,000 divine years	8 skillful states of mind motivated by non-attachment, friendliness and wisdom (*kusala-citta*)	SENSE-SPHERE MIND (*kāmāvacara*)
		Those who delight in creation (*nimmāṇa-ratin*)		64,000 divine years		
		The Delighted (*tusita*)		16,000 divine years		
		The Yama Gods (*yāma*)		8,000 divine years		
		The Thirty-Three Gods (*tāvatiṃsa*)		2,000 divine years		
		The Gods of the Four Kings (*cātummahārājika*)		500 divine years		
		Human Beings (*manussa*)		variable		
		Jealous Gods (*asura*)	DESCENTS (*apāya*)	unspecified	12 unskillful states of mind motivated by attachment, aversion and delusion (*akusala-citta*)	
		Hungry Ghosts (*petti-visaya*)		unspecified		
		Animals (*tiracchānayoni*)		unspecified		
		Hell Beings (*niraya*)		unspecified		

Figure 1 The thirty-one realms of existence, according to the following Pāli sources: Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha 22–24; Vibhaṅga 422–26; Visuddhimagga 7:40–44, 8:29–65; Dīghanikāyaṭṭhakathāṭīkā 1:217.

beings in the Brahma worlds must experience some unskillful consciousness, otherwise their *kamma* would be exclusively skillful, and they would be able to remain forever in these blissful realms where no unpleasant bodily or mental feeling ever occurs, escaping *dukkha* permanently rather than only temporarily (albeit for an aeon or two). Finally, beings such as humans who are in the middle of the hierarchy are evenly poised; they may experience the most unskillful kinds of consciousness or they may experience the most skillful—they may go right to the bottom or right to the top.

A point of particular significance that emerges from this is that, from the perspective of Abhidharma, to shift from talk about levels of existence to talk about levels of the mind is to continue to talk about the same thing but on a different scale. What is involved in moving from the psychological order (the hierarchy of consciousness) to the cosmological order (the hierarchy of beings) is essentially a shift in time scales. The mind (of certain beings) might range through the possible levels of consciousness in a relatively short period—possibly in moments. A being, in contrast, exists at a particular level in the cosmos for rather longer—84,000 aeons in the case of a being in the realm of "neither consciousness nor unconsciousness"—and to range through all the possible levels of being is going to take a very long time indeed.[34] The fact that what we are talking about here is a change of scale is exactly brought out by the Abhidharma treatment of "dependent arising" (*pratītyasamutpāda*). This law that governs the process of things, whether the workings of the mind or the process of rebirth, is always the same. Thus the Abhidharma illustrates the operation of the twelve links of dependent arising either by reference to the way in which beings progress from life to life or by reference to the progress of consciousness from moment to moment: from one perspective we are born, live, and die over a period of, say, eighty years; from another we are born, live, and die in every moment.[35] In chapter 3 of the Abhidharmakośa, Vasubandhu in fact discusses these different scales for the interpretation of *pratītyasamutpāda* precisely in the context of his exposition of cosmology (vv. 20–38). In general, traditional Buddhist cosmology as expounded in the Nikāyas and Abhidhamma must be understood as at once a map of all realms of existence and an account of all possible experiences.

The expansion and contraction of world-systems

According to Buddhist cosmological systems the universe is constituted by innumerable "world-systems" or "world-spheres." (*loka-dḥātu, cakkavāḷa*) comprising just thirty-one levels of existence.[36] Much as the mind is not static or stable, neither, on a grander scale, are world-systems; they themselves go through vast cycles of expansion and contraction. According to the exegetical traditions of both the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins, the formula I quoted from the Aggañña-sutta, referring as it does to the rebirth of beings in the realm of Radiance (*ābhassara/ābhāsvara*)[37] at the time of world contraction, describes this

contraction as the result of destruction by fire. Both Buddhaghosa and Vasubandhu provide some further details about how the destruction proceeds.[38] According to Buddhaghosa, world-systems contract in great clusters—he speaks of a billion (*koṭi-sata-sahassa*) world-systems contracting at a time.[39] Both writers describe how, when they contract, world-systems contract from the bottom upward. Thus in the case of destruction by fire, the fire starts in the lower realms of the sense sphere and having burned up these, it invades the form realms; but having burned up the realms corresponding to the first *jhāna/ dhyāna*, it stops. The realms corresponding to the second, third, and fourth *jhānas*, and the four formless realms, are thus spared the destruction. But destruction by fire is not the only kind of destruction, merely the most frequent—water and wind also wreak their havoc. When the destruction is by water, the three realms corresponding to the second *jhāna* are also included in the general destruction, while the destruction by wind invades and destroys even the realms corresponding to the third *jhāna*. Overall, only the seven realms corresponding to the fourth *jhāna* and the four formless realms are never subject to this universal destruction.[40]

So what becomes of the beings that occupy the lower realms when fire, water, and wind wreak their destruction? They cannot just disappear from *saṃsāra*; they must go somewhere. Here we touch upon a question which posed something of a problem in the Buddhist tradition and to which its answers are not entirely consistent. The simple answer that Buddhaghosa gives in the Visuddhimagga is that at the time of the destruction of a world-system by fire, all the beings that occupy the lower realms—including hell beings (*nerayika*)—are reborn in the Ābhassara Brahma realm (corresponding to the second *jhāna*) or above it. But since rebirth in a Brahma realm can only occur as a result of the practice of the *jhānas*, Buddhaghosa has a problem. The chaos and hardships that are a prelude to the destruction of the world are hardly conducive to the practice of *jhāna*. Moreover, certain beings simply do not have the capacity to attain *jhāna* even if they try.

> There is no rebirth in the Brahma world without *jhāna*, and some beings are oppressed by the scarcity of food, and some are incapable of attaining *jhāna*. How are they reborn there? By virtue of *jhāna* acquired in the Deva world. For at that time, knowing that in a hundred thousand years the aeon will come to an end, the sense-sphere gods, called "Marshals of the World," loosen their head-dresses and, with disheveled hair and pitiful faces, wiping their tears with their hands, clothed in red and wearing their garments in great disarray, come and frequent the haunts of men saying, "Good sirs, a hundred thousand years from now the aeon will come to an end: this world will be destroyed, the great ocean will dry up, and Sineru, king of mountains, will be burnt up and destroyed. The destruction of the world will reach the Brahma world. Develop loving kindness, good sirs. Develop compassion, sympathetic

> joy, and equanimity. Take care of your mothers and fathers; honor the elders of the family." Hearing their words, both men and the deities of the earth are for the most part moved; they become kind to one another, and making merit by loving kindness and so on, they are reborn in the Deva world. There they enjoy the food of the gods and having completed the initial work on the air *kasiṇa*, they attain *jhāna*.
>
> However there are others who are reborn in the Deva world by virtue of their *kamma* "that is to be experienced at an unspecified time," for there is certainly no being wandering in *saṃsāra* devoid of *kamma* that is to be experienced at an unspecified time. They also similarly acquire *jhāna* there [in the Deva world]. So all beings are reborn in the Brahma world by virtue of the attainment of *jhāna*.[41]

For Buddhaghosa, at the time of the contraction of a world-system, all the beings occupying the lower realms should be understood as being reborn in those higher Brahma worlds that escape the destruction—this is true even of the beings in the lower realms of hell. When all else fails, this comes about by virtue of the fact that there is no being in *saṃsāra* that has not at some time or other performed the *kamma* necessary for rebirth in the happy realms of the sense sphere. Thus even beings born in hell realms as the result of unwholesome *kamma* will always have a latent good *kamma* that can come to fruition at the time of the pending contraction of the world-system; this is their "*kamma* to be experienced at an unspecified time" (*aparâpariya-vedanīya-kamma*).[42] Such beings are first reborn in a sense-sphere heaven, where they subsequently cultivate *jhāna* leading to rebirth in the Brahma worlds. What follows from this view of the matter is that all beings in *saṃsāra* are regarded as having dwelt at some time in the Brahma realms corresponding to the second, third, and fourth *jhānas*; moreover, periodically—though the periods may be of inconceivable duration—all beings are regarded as returning to these realms.

It seems, however, that some in the Buddhist tradition were not entirely happy with the understanding of the matter presented by Buddhaghosa. Commenting on the phrase, "when the world contracts beings are for the most part born in the realm of Radiance," as it occurs in the Brahmajāla Sutta, Buddhaghosa states that " 'for the most part' [*yebhuyyena*] is said because there are other beings who are born either in higher Brahma realms or in the formless realms."[43] Dhammapāla, however, in his subcommentary on the text by Buddhaghosa, adds:

> "or in world-systems other than those in the process of contracting" is the alternative to be understood by the word *or*. For it is not possible to consider that all beings in the descents at that time are born in form or formless existence, since it is impossible for those beings in the descents with the longest life spans to be reborn in the human realm.[44]

Dhammapāla's problem with Buddhaghosa's account seems to be that it fails to take account of the case of beings who, for example, commit one of the five great *ānantariya-kammas* (killing one's mother, father, an arhat, wounding a Buddha, splitting the Saṃgha) toward the end of an aeon. Such beings must as a result surely be born in the hell realms, and yet the aeon might end before they had lived out the result of that *kamma*. Dhammapāla therefore concludes that such beings must be reborn in the hells of other world systems.[45]

Looking further afield in Buddhist sources we find other instances of both Buddhaghosa's position and Dhammapāla's position on what happens to beings in the lower realms when a world-system contracts. For example, in chapter 3 of the *Kośa*, Vasubandhu writes:

> When not a single being remains in the hells, the world has contracted to this extent: namely by the contraction of the hells. At that time any being who still has karma that must be experienced in a hell is thrown into the hells of another world-system [that is not contracting].[46]

In chapter 8, however, Vasubandhu comments that at the time of the contraction of a world-system, "all beings of the lower realms produce *dhyāna* of the form-realm because of the special occurrence of skillful dharmas."[47] Yaśomitra comments that in these circumstances *dhyāna* arises without any instruction because of the existence of the trace (*vāsanā*) of previous *dhyāna* attainment.[48]

Another cosmological treatise current in Southeast Asia is the eleventh- or twelfth-century *Lokapaññatti*. Like the *Visuddhimagga* of Buddhaghosa, the *Lokapaññatti* states that at the time of the contraction of a world-system, beings in the lower realms are reborn first in the *kāmadhatu* and then in the Ābhassara realm after practicing the second *jhāna*; there is no mention of being reborn in the hells of other world systems.[49] The much later Theravādin source, "Three Worlds according to King Ruang," on the other hand, takes the line of Dhammapāla and chapter 3 of the *Kośa*, stating that hell beings may be reborn in the hells of world-systems that are not contracting.[50]

What are relative merits of these two perspectives regarding what happens to beings in lower realms at the time of world contraction? The position represented by Dhammapāla, *Kośa* chapter 3 and the *Triphum* of Phya Lithai—namely, that they are reborn in the lower realms of world-systems that are not in the process of contracting—appears to be more in keeping with the laws of karma and, for this reason, the more carefully considered: beings who murder their mothers, fathers, arhats, wound a Buddha, or split the Saṃgha must surely experience the results of their actions whether or not a world-system contracts.[51] Yet this makes the alternative tradition—that all beings are reborn in the Brahma realms—all the more interesting and, I think, significant. It is, as it were, the *lectio difficilior*. Why should Buddhaghosa, Vasubandhu, and the *Lokapaññatti* preserve and hand down a tradition that is so obviously problematic? In order to answer this question I would like to turn first to consider the theoretical account

of the stages of the Buddhist path, since it seems to me that, viewed in the light of each other, the accounts of the stages of the path and the process of the expansion and contraction of the universe reveal clues about the unspoken assumptions that lie at the heart of Indian Buddhist thought.

Cosmology and the Buddhist path

What should perhaps be regarded as the classic Nikāya account of the stages of the Buddhist path is found repeated in various *suttas* of the *sīlakkhandha-vagga* of the Dīgha Nikāya, and also, with slight variations, in several *suttas* of the Majjhima Nikāya.[52] This account can be summarized in simple terms as follows: on the basis of the practice of good conduct (*sīla*), the *bhikkhu* practices meditation; by this means, he abandons the five hindrances and attains the first *jhāna*. Attaining, successively, the second and third *jhānas*, the *bhikkhu* is described as further refining his concentrated mind until he eventually attains and abides in the fourth *jhāna*. This is described as a state of "purity of equanimity and mindfulness" (*upekkhā-sati-pārisuddhi*); "he suffuses his body with his mind that has been thoroughly purified and cleansed."[53] We then have a description of a series of eight (in the Dīgha) or three (in the Majjhima)[54] different attainments, each one of which is introduced by precisely the same formula: "When his mind has become concentrated thus, when it is thoroughly purified and cleansed, stainless, the defilements absent, when it has become sensitive, workable, steady, having attained imperturbability, he inclines and applies his mind to . . ."[55] In other words, having stilled the mind to the level of the fourth *jhāna*, the *bhikkhu* has brought his mind to an extremely refined state that is suitable and fit for various tasks: the development of knowledge of the interdependence of consciousness and the body; the creation of a mind-made body; the acquiring of certain extraordinary powers (the *iddhis* and other abilities, elsewhere termed higher knowledges or *abhiññās*). Lastly he may apply this mind to the gaining of the knowledge of the destruction of the *āsavas*, the knowledge of suffering, the arising of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering; he then knows that for him birth is destroyed and that there is no future rebirth after the present one.[56]

The story of the *bhikkhu* in the Kevaddha-sutta to which I referred earlier is in fact a rather precise parable of this understanding of the progress of the Buddhist path. The *bhikkhu* of the Kevaddha-sutta resorts to increasingly subtler states of consciousness and/or levels of the cosmos in order to seek an answer to the question of the ultimate nature of the universe; and yet, having come to the furthest reaches of the universe, he does not find his question satisfactorily answered but must return to the Buddha and be instructed to reorient his quest. Similarly, the *bhikkhu* who attains *jhāna* does not come to the end of the path but must turn his attention elsewhere in order finally to understand the nature of suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation.

It is in the light of this close correspondence that exists in Buddhist literature

between journeys through the realms of the cosmos and inner journeys of the mind that the significance of the accounts of the expansion and contraction of the universe begins to be revealed. Stanley Tambiah has already drawn attention to this in some comments made in his study of the Thai forest monastic tradition—comments which are, however, brief and do not articulate the nature of the parallels entirely accurately.[57] Buddhist cosmology—in general, but especially in the account of the contraction and expansion of world-systems—provides us with a poetic, imaginative, and mythic counterpart to accounts of the stages of *jhāṇa* attainment. Reading accounts of the Buddhist path alongside tales of the universe's end and beginning is the way to enter more fully into the thought-world of ancient Indian Buddhism. In particular, what is revealed in the cosmological accounts is the understanding of the nature of the fourth *jhāna:* both the theoretical accounts of the stages of the path and the mythic descriptions of the contraction of the world-system converge on the fourth *jhāna*.

That the mythic account of the contraction of a world-system can be read as paralleling a meditator's progress through the successive *dhyāna*s is brought out explicitly in the following passage from the Abhidharmakośa which comments on how, at the time of contraction, fire, water, and wind destroy the successively higher levels of the world-system:

> In the first *dhyāna* thinking and reflection are imperfections; these are similar to fire since they burn through the mind. In the second *dhyāna* joy is the imperfection; this is like water since, by association with tranquility, it makes the senses soft. . . . In the third *dhyāna* out-breaths and in-breaths [are imperfections]; these are actually winds. In this way the subjective [*adhyātmika*] imperfection in a *dhyāna* attainment is of the same nature as the objective [*bāhya*] imperfection in the corresponding *dhyāna* rebirth.[58]

A meditator's entering the fourth *jhāna* thus marks the temporary attainment of a state of consciousness that is secure in its freedom from disturbances and defilements. For just as the realms of existence corresponding to the fourth *jhāna* can never be reached by the ravages of fire, water, or wind, so the mind in the fourth *jhāna* is undisturbed either by the gross objects of the five senses or the subtler movements of the mind still remaining in the first, second, and third *jhāna*s. What is more, viewed from the cosmological perspective of the expansion and contraction of the world-system and the periodic return of beings to the Brahma realms, in stilling the mind to the level of the fourth *jhāna*, the *bhikkhu* is returning to a state experienced long ago. The cultivation of the *jhāna*s becomes almost a kind of Platonic recollection of something long forgotten, of something one does not remember one knows. The recovery of the fourth *jhāna* is a return to a basic or fundamental state—a stable and imperturbable state of the universe and also of the mind.[59]

In saying, however, that the realms of existence corresponding to the fourth

jhāna are always there, it is, of course, necessary to keep firmly in mind Buddhist principles of impermanence. The realms of the fourth *jhāna* do not have some kind of mysterious existence of their own; these realms always exist in the sense that there are always beings "in" these realms, although the particular beings occupying these realms continually change and no individual being can permanently exist in such a realm. The fourth *jhāna* realms thus do not constitute some kind of permanent substrate of the universe; it is simply that there are always beings "there," or rather beings that exist in the manner of the fourth *jhāna*. For the Ābhassara or Vehapphala, realms are not so much places as modes or ways of being.[60] So, to say that periodically the world contracts back as far as the Vehapphala realm is exactly to say that periodically beings return to this manner of being. It is in this sense that the levels associated with the fourth *jhāna* are basic, fundamental, almost, one might say, primordial. This, it seems, is precisely why they can serve as the stepping-off point for gaining the four formless attainments,[61] for developing various extraordinary meditational powers,[62] for realizing the liberating knowledge of the path. This, it seems, is precisely why, at the time of his *parinibbāna*, the fourth *jhāna* is the final active state of mind to be experienced by a living Buddha.[63]

I am now in a position to return to the question I posed above concerning Buddhaghosa's (and others') account of the process of the contraction of world-systems: Why does he preserve an apparently problematic account? The view handed down by Buddhaghosa, which he has no doubt received from the Sinhala *aṭṭhakathā* sources he had before him, seems concerned to emphasize that no being in *saṃsāra* is without the necessary *kamma* to enable a skillful rebirth in the *kāmadhātu* as a basis for subsequent rebirth in the realms corresponding to the fourth *jhāna*; and that there is no being in *saṃsāra* without experience of the realms of the fourth *jhāna*—of the states which give close access to the liberating insight of *bodhi*. In other words, all beings have the capacity to become awakened and indeed all have somewhere in them an experience of a state of mind that is in certain important respects "close" to the awakening state of mind.

The Mahāyāna

To anyone familiar with the Mahāyāna, the suggestion that beings always have within them a capacity to become awakened sounds strangely familiar, and at this point I would like to consider certain parallels that can, I think, be found between the cosmological ideas I have been discussing and certain ideas that find expression in Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Buddhaghosa's account of what happens to beings when a world-system contracts bears a certain resemblance to aspects of an idea we are accustomed to associate with the Mahāyāna, namely, the tradition of *tathāgatagarbha*—"that within each being which enables enlightenment to take place."[64] Although formulated rather differently, something of the *tathāgatagarbha* way of thinking is, I suggest, present in the cosmological traditions

of the Abhidharma. In the context of the Nikāya and Abhidharma understanding of the development of the stages of the Buddhist path, the function of a "trace" left by previous *dhyāna* practice experienced long ago, or of a skillful karma "to be experienced at an unspecified time" which makes for the attainment of the fourth *dhyāna* state, is in significant respects similar to that of the *tathāgatagarbha* in Mahāyāna thought: both may facilitate and effect enlightenment for deluded beings. This is not to suggest that Buddhaghosa here espouses a doctrine of *tathāgatagarbha* or that *tathāgatagarbha* views have influenced him or that he has influenced the development of *tathāgatagarbha* theory. Rather there appears to be a common Buddhist theme here that finds expression in one way in Buddhaghosa's account of the contraction of a world-system and in another way in the theory of *tathāgatagarbha*.[65] While we cannot say that Buddhaghosa's account of the expansion and contraction of a world-system is in all respects equivalent to the theory of *tathāgatagarbha*, we can say that in *certain* respects it is; there is a certain overlap here.

A second area of interest centers on the understanding of the "pure abodes" (*suddhâvāsa/śuddhâvāsa*) in the Nikāyas, Abhidharma, and Mahāyāna. The Buddhist yogin who has mastered the fourth *jhāna* has withdrawn the mind from the world of the senses, from the world of ordinary ideas and thoughts, and returned it, as it were, to a refined and fundamental state. From this state of mind he now has the possibility of seeing the world more clearly, seeing it as it truly is, and even, to a limited extent, by the practice of the various meditational powers (such as creating mind-made bodies, etc.), of constructing a different world. This way of thinking is continued and taken further in Mahāyāna Buddhist thought. For it is in the realm of the fourth *dhyāna* that Bodhisattvas become Buddhas and create their "Buddha fields" and "pure lands."

In non-Mahāyāna texts the five "pure abodes" are regarded as the abodes of "never-returners" (*anāgāmin*), beings who are all but awakened, beings who are in their last life and who will certainly attain arhatship before they pass away.[66] Rather interestingly, then, according to certain traditions of the developed Mahāyāna, the Akaniṣṭha realm—the highest of the "pure abodes" and of the realms of the fourth *dhyāna*—is occupied not by never-returners about to become arhats but by tenth-stage Bodhisattvas about to become *samyaksambuddhas*. Having attained Buddhahood in the Akaniṣṭha realm, they send out their "creation bodies" (*nirmāṇa-kāya*) to the lower realms for the benefit of sentient beings. Śāntarakṣita in the *Tattvasaṃgraha* explains as follows:

> 3549. Since their existence is outside *saṃsāra*, which consists of the five destinies, the death of Buddhas is not admitted by us; therefore it is their creations that are perceived.
> 3550. In the lovely city of Akaniṣṭha, free from all impure abodes—there Buddhas awaken; but here [in this world] creations awaken.[67]

Kamalaśīla goes on to comment:

> *Saṃsāra* consists of the five destinies comprising hells, hungry-ghosts, animals, gods and men; and since Buddhas exist outside this their mortality is not accepted. How then does one learn of their birth in the family of Śuddhodana and others? Accordingly he says that it is their creations that are perceived. Supporting this from scripture he utters the words beginning, "In the Akaniṣṭha. . . ." There are gods called the Akaniṣṭhas; in a certain place among them the gods are called "those belonging to the pure abodes," for here only the pure noble ones dwell. Among them the highest place is called the Palace of the Great Lord, and there only Bodhisattvas in their last existence who are established in the tenth *bhūmi* are born, while here [in this world] by reason of their sovereignty in that place their creations gain knowledge. Such is the tradition.[68]

Significantly, a level associated with the fourth *dhyāna* is once more conceived of as in some sense fundamental and primordial—the level upon which the creative activity of Buddhas is based.

The extent and precise interpretation of the tradition that Buddhas become enlightened in Akaniṣṭha is not, however, entirely clear; the ancient accounts of the career of the Bodhisattva are varied and not always consistent. The exact source of Śāntarakṣita's quotation from "scripture" (*āgama*) is not traced, although the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra (Sagāthaka vv. 38–40, 772–74) similarly states that beings become Buddhas in the Pure Abodes "among the Akaniṣṭhas of the form-realm" while their creations awaken in this world:

> 772. I am of Kātyāyana's family; issuing from the Pure Abode I teach beings dharma that leads to the city of nirvāṇa.
> 773. This is the ancient path; the Tathāgatas and I have taught nirvāṇa in three thousand sūtras.
> 774. Thus not in the realm of the senses nor in the formless does a Buddha awaken, but among the Akaniṣṭhas of the form realm who are free of passion he awakens.[69]

Taking this tradition at face value, what seems to be being said is that full Buddhahood is attained by a tenth-stage Bodhisattva in the Akaniṣṭha realm; after this the "created" or "emanated" body (*nirmāṇakāya*) performs the acts of a Buddha beginning with the descent to this world from Tuṣita, the Heaven of Delight. In other words, Siddhārtha Gautama from the time of his conception and birth is a *nirmāṇa-kāya* of an already fully awakened Buddha. However, such an understanding is not entirely consistent with what is said in the Prajñāpāramitā literature or in the *Daśabhūmika* about the final stages of the career of the Bodhisattva.

The *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā* appears to make no mention of the Pure Abodes or Akaniṣṭha in this connection, and it is the ninth-stage Bod-

hisattva that descends into the womb, takes birth, and sits beneath the tree of awakening, reaching the tenth stage when he becomes a Tathāgata.[70]

Although the *Daśabhūmika* once again does not mention the Pure Abodes or Akaniṣṭha in connection with the *bhūmis*, it does talk of Bodhisattvas established in the tenth stage as being "mostly the Great Lord [*maheśvara*], king of the gods [*deva-rāja*]."[71] Various passages (which must be the source of the *Tattvasaṃgraha* tradition quoted above) consistently identify these terms as epithets of the chief of the gods of the Pure Abodes.[72] But for the *Daśabhūmika* it is the Bodhisattva of the tenth stage (and not the ninth stage as in the Prajñāpāramitā) who manifests in a single world-system all the acts of Tathāgatas from abiding in the Tuṣita realm to Parinirvāṇa (the final attainment of nirvāṇa at death), but he appears to do this as Bodhisattva, remaining such and not becoming a full Buddha in the process.[73] Moreover,

> At will he displays the array of the realms of all the Buddhas at the end of a single hair; at will he displays untold arrays of the realms of the Buddhas of all kinds; at will in the twinkling of an eye he creates as many individuals as there are particles in untold world-systems. ... In the arising of a thought he embraces the ten directions; in a moment of thought he controls the manifestation of innumerable processes of complete awakening and final nirvāṇa.... In his own body he controls countless manifestations of the qualities of the Buddha fields of innumerable Blessed Buddhas.[74]

If this is what tenth-stage Bodhisattvas do, then what do Buddhas do? Ignoring the poetic imagination of the *Daśabhūmika*, the short answer seems to be much, much more of the same—so much so that one cannot properly begin to conceive of what Buddhas truly do. Nevertheless, it appears that we are to understand that at some point in the process—the repeated process of manifesting the acts of Buddhas and carrying out their work—these tenth-stage Bodhisattvas do actually become Buddhas.

At this point it is useful, I think, to consider the witness of the later Indo-Tibetan tradition. mKhas grub rje's "Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras" (*rGyud sde spyi'i rnam par gzhag pa rgyas par brjod*) is an early fifteenth-century dGe lugs work which devotes its first chapter to the question of how the Śrāvakas and then the Mahāyāna (considered by way of the "Pāramitā" and "Mantra" schools) understand the final stages of the process of the Blessed teacher's becoming a fully awakened one (*abhisambuddha*).[75] Let me go straight to mKhas grub rje's account of the understanding of this process according to the Mantra school. mKhas grub rje takes it as axiomatic for the Mahāyāna that full awakening is gained in Akaniṣṭha. But how precisely does it come about there? mKhas grub rje details the position of the Yoga and Anuttarayoga Tantras according to a number of Indian commentators (eighth to tenth century). For present concerns some indication of his account of Śākyamitra's and

Buddhaguhya's understanding of the Yoga Tantras will suffice. According to them, Siddhārtha Gautama, a tenth-stage Bodhisattva from the time of his birth, having practiced austerities for six years, then established himself in the imperturbable concentration (*āniñjyo-nāma-samādhi*) of the fourth *dhyāna*.

> At that time, the Buddhas of all the ten directions assembled, aroused him from that *samādhi* by snapping their fingers, and said to him, "You cannot become a Manifest Complete Buddha by this *samādhi* alone." "Then how shall I proceed?" he implored them. They guided him to the Akaniṣṭha heaven. Moreover, while his maturation body (*vipāka-kāya*) stayed on the bank of the same Nairañjanā River, the mental body (*manomaya-kāya*) of the Bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddha proceeded to the Akaniṣṭha heaven.
>
> After the Buddhas of the ten directions had given garment initiation (*vastra-abhiṣeka*) and diadem initiation (*mukuṭa-abhiṣeka*), they bade him enter the intense contemplation in sequence of the five Abhisaṃbodhi. After completing the five Abhisaṃbodhi, he became a Manifest Complete Buddha as Mahāvairocana, the Saṃbhoga-kāya.[76]

Insofar as this account sees Gautama as a Bodhisattva who has taken a human birth in his last existence and the enlightenment as straightforwardly founded on the actual attainment of the fourth *dhyāna*, it is closer (than, say, the *Pañcaviṃśatikā* or *Daśabhūmika* accounts) to the Nikāya description; the Bhayabherava-sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya describes the Bodhisatta as gaining the fourth *jhāna* and then, on the basis of that attainment, the three knowledges which culminate in the knowledge of the destruction of the *āsavas*.[77]

If we now consider the above range of material on the process of the Bodhisattva's final attainment of Buddhahood, it seems that it embraces two basic views. According to one view the Bodhisattva in his "final existence" (i.e., before finally transcending existence) is *reborn* in the Akaniṣṭha heaven where he finally becomes a Buddha; he subsequently manifests various creations which *appear* to be born, go forth, practice, meditation, and become Buddhas. According to the other the Bodhisattva in his last existence is actually born as a human being; seated beneath the tree of awakening he ascends *in meditation* with a mind-made body to the Akaniṣṭha heaven where he finally becomes a Buddha, while his "real" human body remains seated beneath the tree. Yet to state the positions thus baldly actually infringes a deeply rooted ambiguity and equivocation that runs through the cosmological material I have been considering in the course of this article. For where is the true Buddha? In Akaniṣṭha? Or seated beneath the tree of awakening? How does one come to Akaniṣṭha? By traveling through space? Or by journeying in the mind? Let me emphasize here that I am asking these questions of the ancient texts and not raising the problem of how the modern Buddhist tradition should set about finding an understanding of its ancient cosmology that is compatible with the "findings" or modern science,

whatever precisely those are. And my point is that to ask such questions in such terms betrays a particular metaphysics and ontology which is precisely not the metaphysics and ontology of the Indian Buddhist tradition.

In the course of this article I have been trying to explore the way in which psychology and cosmology parallel each other in Buddhist thought—something that Peter Masefield has already tried to elucidate in the Nikāyas by reference to the Upaniṣadic terms *adhyātmam* and *adhidaivatam*. I have suggested that in the Abhidharma the shift from psychology (levels of *citta*) to cosmology (levels of the *lokadhātu*) can be viewed as a shift of time scale. The effect of my discussion is not to reveal something new but to bring into sharper focus something that lies at the heart of Indian Buddhist thought, namely, a basic ambiguity about matters of cosmology and psychology, about the objective outer world and the subjective inner world. This is true to the extent that the key to understanding both is to recognize that there is a fundamental and profound equivalence between cosmology and psychology.

In conclusion I should like to risk a few general comments about the metaphysics and ontology of Indian Buddhism. I do not want to imply here that all Indian Buddhism shares an explicit and definite metaphysics and ontology, but I am suggesting that there is a general, underlying orientation, which tends to locate reality in the mind and its processes rather than in something "out there" which is other than the mind. We may want to persist in asking questions in the latter terms, yet it is significant that the tradition itself never quite does. On the contrary, it seems to take for granted and as natural an ambiguity between cosmology and psychology, for what is the difference between really *being* in Akaniṣṭha and *experiencing* one is really in Akaniṣṭha?

To put it another way, there is a loosely "idealist" tendency to all Indian Buddhist thought. It is no accident that one of the most important and influential philosophical schools of Indian Buddhism, the Yogācāra, expounded an idealist ontology. For the Yogācāra the only reality anything ultimately has is psychological. Yogācāra thought is essentially a product of and a continuation of an Abhidharmic way of thinking; it gives explicit expression in systematic and philosophical form to a tendency that runs through the whole of Buddhist thought. The Theravādin Abhidhamma tends to sidestep the issue of the ultimate ontological status of the external world and the world of matter; the question is never explicitly raised. Yet for the Theravādin Abhidhamma—and as I understand it this would also be true of the Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma—the physical world each being lives in and experiences is one that is the result of his or her past *kamma* performed by deed, word, and thought; regardless of the ultimate ontological status of the external world and the world of matter, the particular physical sensations that beings experience are constructed mentally insofar as each one is the result of past *kamma*. In technical Abhidhamma terms our basic experience of the physical world is encompassed by just ten classes of sense-sphere consciousness that are the results (*vipāka*) of twelve unskillful and eight skillful classes of sense-sphere consciousnesses: what we thought in the past has

created the world we live in and experience in the present; what we think in the present will create the world we shall live in in the future.[78] Or, as Dhammapada (vv. 1–2) famously put it, "dhammas have mind as their forerunner, mind as preeminent, mind as their maker" ("manopubbaṃgamā dhammā manoseṭṭhā manomaya"). That is, Indian Buddhist thought is in unanimous agreement that ultimately the particular world each of us experiences is something that we individually and collectively have created by our thoughts. The parallel that exists in Buddhist thought between cosmology and psychology is simply a reflection of this basic fact of the Abhidharma understanding of the nature of existence.

Indologists are familiar with the Upaniṣadic interiorization of the Vedic sacrificial ritual; students of Hindu and Buddhist Tantra take for granted the correspondences that are made between the body of the yogin and the universe as microcosm and macrocosm respectively.[79] Yet the similarities between this and certain ways and patterns of thinking found in early and Abhidharmic Buddhist thought are rarely recognized in the existing scholarly literature. These similarities consist in the general tendency to assimilate some kind of internal world to an external world, and in the principle that places mind and psychology—the way the world is experienced—first. The assimilation of cosmology and psychology found in early Buddhist thought and developed in the Abhidharma must be seen in this context to be fully understood and appreciated. I can do no better than to finish with the words of the Buddha:

> That the end of the world . . . is to be known, seen or reached by travelling—that I do not say. . . . And yet I do not say that one makes an end of suffering without reaching the end of the world. Rather, in this fathom-long body, with its consciousness and mind, I declare the world, the arising of the world, the ceasing of the world and the way leading to the ceasing of the world.[80]

Appendix A

Bibliography

Abbreviations

A	Aṅguttara-Nikāya
Abhidh-av	Abhidhammāvatāra
Abhidh-dī	Adhidharmadīpa
Abhidh-k-(bh)	Abhidharmakośa-(bhāṣya)
Abhid-s-(ṭ)	Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha-(ṭīkā)
As	Atthaśālinī
D	Dīgha-Nikāya
DAṬ	Dīghanikāyaṭṭhakathāṭīkā

Dhp-a	Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā
Kv	Kathāvatthu
M	Majjhima-Nikāya
Mp	Manorathapūraṇī
Pp	Papañcasūdanī
S	Saṃyutta-Nikāya
Sn	Suttanipāta
Sv	Sumaṅgalavilāsinī
Vibh	Vibhaṅga
Vibh-a	Vibhaṅgaṭṭhakathā (= Sammohavinodanī)
Vism	Visuddhimagga
Vism-ṭ	Visuddhimagga-ṭikā (= Paramatthamañjūsāṭikā)

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Appendix B

How old is Buddhist cosmology? A note on the Aggañña-sutta

The writings of a number of scholars seem to imply that the Nikāya cosmology should not be attributed to the Buddha himself. Konrad Meisig, continuing the work of Ulrich Schneider, argues that the account of the evolution of the world and human society introduced by the formula I quoted at the start of this article should not be regarded as forming part of the "original" Aggañña-sutta.[81] Schneider's and Meisig's arguments are complex and involved but appear to me to be neither individually nor collectively conclusive. The fact remains that the cosmogonic myth forms a significant part of all four versions of the text that Meisig examines; in other words, we have no hard evidence of an Aggañña-sutta—or whatever its "original" title—without the cosmogonic myth. On the other hand, we do have some hard evidence for the cosmogonic myth apart from the Aggañña-sutta.[82] Even when it is not accepted as forming part of an "original" Aggañña-sutta, it must be acknowledged that the tradition it represents is well attested.

The whole notion of an original version of a sutta raises interesting questions. The kind of model with which Meisig would seem to be working regards the original Aggañña-sutta as a discourse delivered by the Buddha himself on one particular occasion (at Sāvatthī since all versions are agreed in locating it there?), which was remembered by his followers and for a while handed down faithfully by them, until someone or some group still in the pre-Aśokan period appended to it a cosmogonic myth.[83] But this kind of model is perhaps inappropriate to the composition and transmission of oral literature and may also be historically naive. A more appropriate general model for an original sutta might be of a "text" representing the substance of a discourse or teaching that the Buddha himself may have given on a number of different occasions and which in part at least draws on a stock of images and formulas which the Buddha himself employed in a variety of contexts as he considered appropriate. Whether or not

the Buddha himself composed his teachings in this way, it is clear that someone started doing so at some point, since many of the discourses of the Pāli Nikāyas and Chinese Āgamas are manifestly put together in this way. This, however, is a matter that needs more systematic research. It may well be that Schneider's and Meisig's analysis goes some way to revealing the blocks of tradition which have been put together to form the Aggañña-sutta; but to expose these blocks of tradition does not of itself tell us anything about who put them together and when. In the end, Schneider's and Meisig's understanding of the original Aggañña-sutta amounts to a judgment about how well the blocks of tradition have been put together; their view is that they have been put together badly and that the two basic parts of the discourse are ill-fitting. Yet even if we agree with this judgment, the bare fact that a sutta is badly put together does not of itself preclude the possibility that it is the original work of the Buddha; a claim that the Buddha cannot possibly have made such a mess of it is an appeal to the transcendent notion of Buddhahood rather than a conclusive historical argument.

To say that the Aggañña-sutta is composed of two parts must surely be largely uncontroversial. Clearly paragraphs 1–9 and 27–32 do form something of a unity and could intelligibly stand on their own; again, the cosmogonic myth of paragraphs 10–26 is an intelligible unit such that the Buddhist tradition itself abstracted portions of it to be used outside this context. But it seems to me purely arbitrary to pick on the first as original and relegate the second to the status of later interpolation. One might just as well argue the Buddha originally gave a discourse consisting of a cosmogonic myth that was later wrapped up in an ethical disquisition on the four classes (*vaṇṇa*) by certain of his followers who did not appreciate myth. This reveals what one suspects might be the true basis for the conclusion that it is the section of the Aggañña-sutta concerned with the four classes that constitute the original sutta: the "ethical" portion of the discourse is to be preferred to the "mythic" precisely because it is ethical, and, as we all know, the earliest Buddhist teachings were simple, ethical teachings, unadulterated by myth and superstition; we know that early Buddhist teaching was like this because of the evidence of the rest of the canon. Here the argument becomes one of classic circularity: we arrive at a particular view about the nature of early Buddhism by ignoring portions of the canon and then use that view to argue for the lateness of the portions of the canon we have ignored.

Richard Gombrich has countered the Schneider/Meisig view of the Aggañña-sutta by arguing that the two parts of the discourse have been skillfully put together and that the cosmogonic myth works as an integral part of the discourse taken as a whole.[84] According to Gombrich the first half of the discourse introduces the problem of the relative status of *brāhmaṇa*s and *sudda*s; this question is then dealt with in a tongue-in-cheek satirical manner by the Aggañña myth. Gombrich regards the overall form of the Aggañña-sutta as we have it as attributable to the Buddha himself and thus original. But for Gombrich the text is "primarily satirical and parodistic in intent," although in time the jokes were lost on its readers and the myth came to be misunderstood by Buddhist tradition "as

being a more or less straight-faced account of how the universe, and in particular society, originated."[85] Following Gombrich, Steven Collins has discussed the Aggañña Sutta in some detail as a "humorous parable," finding in certain of its phrases echoes of Vinaya formulas.[86] Gombrich's arguments for the essential unity of the Aggañña text as we have it are extremely persuasive, yet I would disagree with the implication that we should regard the mythic portions of the Aggañña-sutta as solely satirical.

Certainly it seems to me that Gombrich must be right in arguing that there is a good deal of intended humor in the Aggañña-sutta, and certainly I would not want to argue that the cosmogonic myth was ever intended to be understood as literal history in the modern sense. How could it have been? Yet it still seems to me unlikely that, for the original compiler(s) of and listeners to the discourse, the mythic portion of the sutta could have been intended to be understood or actually understood in its entirety as a joke at the expense of the poor old *brāhaṇas*. As Gombrich so rightly says, if we want to discover the original meaning of the Buddha's discourses we need to understand the intellectual and cultural pre-suppositions shared by the Buddha and his audience. While in absolute terms this is an impossible task, since we can never entirely escape our own intellectual and cultural presuppositions and be reborn in the world of the Buddha—at least in the short term—we can still surely make some progress in trying to rediscover that world.

The question I would therefore ask is, Do we have any particular historical reasons for supposing that it is unlikely that the Buddha should have recounted a more or less straight-faced cosmogonic myth? My answer is that we do not. Indeed, I want to argue the opposite: what we can know of the cultural milieu in which the Buddha operated and in which the first Buddhist texts were composed suggests that someone such as the Buddha might very well have presented the kind of myth contained in the Aggañña-sutta as something more than merely a piece of satire. Far from being out of key with what we can understand of early Buddhist thought from the rest of the Nikāyas, the cosmogonic views offered by the Aggañña-sutta in fact harmonize extremely well with it. I would go further and say that something along the lines of what is contained in the Aggañña myth is actually required by the logic of what is generally accepted as Nikāya Buddhism.

It might be countered that the Buddha's refusal to answer categorically certain questions—including questions about whether or not the world was eternal and infinite—indicates that the Buddha was not interested in metaphysical questions and instructed his monks not to waste their energy on them. The account of the world on a cosmic scale found in the Aggañña-sutta is then to be seen as not in keeping with the spirit of the Buddha's instructions and therefore as the creation of curious *bhikkhus* who, unable to restrain their imaginations, ignored the express instructions of their teacher. Such an outlook both misunderstands the nature of the, usually, ten "undetermined questions" and misrepresents the Aggañña-sutta. This sutta does not expressly answer the question of

whether or not the world is eternal and infinite, and as Steven Collins has argued, the real reason for the refusal to give a categorical answer to the questions is that they are, from the standpoint of Buddhist thought, linguistically ill-formed.[87] Thus it is not because the Buddha does not know the answer to these questions that he refuses to answer them but because the terms employed in the questions have in the Buddhist view of things no ultimate referent: it simply does not make sense to ask whether the world is eternal or not because there is no one "thing" to which the word world refers. The notion "world" is just like the notion "self": it is not of itself an ultimately real thing but merely a concept, a mental construct. The ten undetermined questions thus, it seems to me, have no direct bearing on the cosmological ideas expounded in the Aggañña-sutta.

Notes

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1 D 3:84–85: "hoti kho ṣo Vāseṭṭha samayo yaṃ kadāci karahaci dighassa addhuno accayena ayaṃ loko saṃvattati. saṃvattamāne loke yebhuyyena sattā ābhassara-saṃvattanikā honti. te tattha honti manomayā pīti-bhakkhā sayam-pabhā antalikkha-carā subhaṭṭhāyino ciraṃ dīghaṃ addhānam tiṭṭhanti. hoti kho so Vāseṭṭha samayo yaṃ kadāci karahaci dīghassa addhuno accayena ayaṃ loko vivattati. vivattamāne loke yebhuyyena sattā ābhassara-kāyā cavitvā itthattaṃ āgacchanti. te ca honti manomayā pīti-bhakkhā sayyampabhā antalikkha-carā subhaṭṭhāyino ciraṃ dīghaṃ addhānaṃ tiṭṭhanti." All references to Pali and Sanskrit texts use the abbreviations listed in app. A of this article. For full citations, see app. A. References are to volume and page of the cited edition, except in the case of the Abhidharmakośa and Visuddhimagga; references to the former are to chapter and verse, and to the latter, to chapter and section of the Warren-Kosambi edition and Ñāṇamoli translation.

2 This initial formula must be regarded as constituting a significant piece of floating tradition that forms part of the common heritage of ancient Buddhism. Apart from its occurrence in all four surviving recensions of the Aggañña-sutta—see K. Meisig, *Das Sūtra von den vier Ständen: Das Aggañña-sutta im Licht seiner chinesischen Parallelen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988)—we find the same formula (though with a slightly different account of the process of world expansion) used in two other suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya: the *Brahmajāla* and *Pāṭika* (D 1:17 and D 3:28–29; the expansion formula here reads: "vivattamāne lọke suññaṃ brahma-vimānaṃ pātubhavati. ath' aññataro satto āyukkhayā vā puññakkhayā vā ābhassara-kāyā cavitvā suññāṃ brahma-vimānaṃ upapajjati. so tattha hoti manomayo pīti-bhakkho sayam-pabho antalikkha-caró subhaṭṭhāyī ciraṃ dīghaṃ addhānaṃ tiṭṭhati"). Two Aṅguttara passages (A 4:89; 5:60) also make use of parts of the formula, while Vibh 415 (cf. D 3:88), which states that human beings at the beginning of an aeon are born lacking the male or female faculty, also alludes to it. Outside the Nikāyas and Āgamas, looking beyond the Pāli tradition we find the formula used in the *Mahāvastu* (see *Le Mahāvastu*, ed. E. Sénart, 3 vols. [Paris, 1882–97], 1:52, 338–39) and referred to and commented on by Vasubandhu in the *Abhidharmakośa* (Abhidh-k 3:97c–d–98a–b; see Louis de La Vallée Poussin, trans., *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu: Traduction et*

Annotations, 6 vols. [Brussels: Institut belge des hautes études chinoises, 1971], 2:203–4, and *Abhidharmakośa and Bhāṣya of Ācārya Vasubandhu with Sphuṭārthā Commentary of Ācārya Yaśmitra*, ed. D. Shastri, 3 vols. [Varanasi: Bauddha Bharati, 1970–72], 2:554).

3 G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* (London, Berkeley, and Los Angeles: Cambridge University Press and University of California Press, 1970), p. 281.

4 See R. F. Gombrich, *Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 153–91; S. J. Tambiah, *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 32–52.

5 The pioneering work is W. Kirfel, *Kosmographie der Inder* (Bonn: K. Schroeder, 1920), but this devotes rather little space to Buddhist sources in comparison to Brahmanical and Jain materials and is now rather dated. It is Louis de La Vallée Poussin's work on the Abhidharmakośa that has given us the most substantial material on Vaibhāṣika cosmology; see his *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu, Vasubandhu et Yaśomitra: Troisième chapitre de l'Abhidharmakośa: Kārikā, Bhāṣya et Vyākhyā* (Brussels: Académie royale de Belgique, 1919), and "Cosmology and Cosmogony (Buddhist)," in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. J. Hastings, 13 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908–27), 2:129–38. The relevant portions of Ñāṇamoli's translation of Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga constitute the only readily available and accessible sources for the developed Theravādin system; see *The Path of Purification* (Colombo: Semage, 1964), 7:40–44, 13:29–65, p. 214, n. 14. The two more comprehensive studies of the details of the Nikāyas' cosmological outlook, Joseph Masson's *La religion populaire dans le canon bouddhique pāli* (Louvain: Bureaux du Muséon, 1942); and M. M. J. Marasinghe's *Gods in Early Buddhism: A Study in Their Social and Mythological Milieu as Depicted in the Nikāyas of the Pāli Canon* (Vidyalankara: University of Sri Lanka, 1974) tend to approach their subject from the standpoint that talk of gods and the like in the Nikāyas is something of a concession to "popular" Buddhism rather than an integral part of Buddhist thought—this is explicitly revealed in the title of Masson's book and is perhaps less true of Marasinghe's work; both these books, however, represent useful collections of material on cosmological ideas as presented in the Nikāyas. The figure of Māra has received some additional attention: T. O. Ling, *Buddhism and the Mythology of Evil: A Study in Theravāda Buddhism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1962); J. W. Boyd, *Satan and Māra: Christian and Buddhist Symbols of Evil* (Leiden: Brill, 1975). R. Kloetzli's more recent *Buddhist Cosmology: From Single World System to Pure Land* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), while providing a useful summary and overview of Buddhist cosmological ideas from the Nikāyas through to the developed Mahāyāna, from my perspective passes rather quickly over the early materials and the Abhidharama. One of the most interesting treatments of cosmology in the Nikāyas to have been published in recent years is Peter Masefield's "Mind/Cosmos Maps in the Pāli Nikāyas," in *Buddhist and Western Psychology*, ed. N. Katz (Boulder, Colo.: Prajñā Press, 1983), pp. 69–93. See also R. F. Gombrich, "Ancient Indian Cosmology," in *Ancient Cosmologies*, ed. C. Blacker and M. Loewe (London, 1975), pp. 110–42.

6 F. E. Reynolds and M. B. Reynolds, *Three Worlds according to King Ruang: A Thai Buddhist Cosmology* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1982). One of the sources employed by Phya Lithai was the earlier Pāli *Lokapaññatti*; see E. Denis, trans. and ed., *La Lokapaññati et les idées cosmologiques du bouddhisme ancien*, 2 vols. (Lille, 1977).

7 S. Collins, *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravāda Buddhism* (Cam-

bridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 165–76, 218–24, 247–61.

8 Tambiah, *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand*, pp. 34–35.

9 Although we do find the beginnings of systematization in the Aṅguttara-Nikāya, see Marasinghe, pp. 244–81.

10 For a summary of the cosmological details as found in the Nikāyas, see ibid., pp. 43–62.

11 See esp. Masson, pp. 18–38, and the chart facing p. 144 for details of the various hierarchical lists found in the Nikāyas.

12 See in particular A 2:126, 230; 4:39, 241; cf. Marasinghe, pp. 244–68, and chart facing p. 62.

13 See Marasinghe, p. 44; D 2:139, 253; M 3:101–2; A 1:227, 5:59.

14 For example, D 1:62: "so imaṃ lokaṃ sadevakaṃ samārakaṃ sabrahmakaṃ sassamaṇa-brāhamaṇiṃ pajaṃ sadeva-manussaṃ sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedeti." I follow the commentary (Sv 1:174) in taking *sadeva* in the sense of *sammuti-deva*. It is possible to take *samāraka* and *sabrahmaka* as indicating a plurality of *māras* and *brahmās*, respectively (on the grounds that the Nikāyas clearly do recognize a plurality of *brahmās* and *māras*); on the other hand, it seems to me probable that in the present context we should take *imaṃ lokaṃ* as implying simply "this [one] world-system" that we occupy; see Boyd, pp. 100–111; cf. the discussion of the terms *loka, loka-dhātu*, and *cakkavāḷa* below, n. 34.

15 Marasinghe (n. 5 above), p. 260; cf. pp. 59, 259–61.

16 See, e.g., the Mahāsīhanāda-sutta (M 1:68–83).

17 See app. B, "How Old Is Buddhist Cosmology? A Note on the Aggañña-Sutta."

18 A 3:415: "cetanâhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi. cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā" (cf. Ȧbhidh-k 4:1).

19 S 1:197–205; Marasinghe, pp. 207–13.

20 S 1:111–13, 116–18, 130–31; 132–33; Marasinghe, pp. 185–98.

21 According to the stock Nikāya formula (e.g., D 1:73), by abandoning the five hindrances one attains the first *jhāna* thereby passing from the *kāmâvacara* to the *rūpāvacara*; the developed cosmological tradition states that Māra dwells as a rebellious prince among the *paranimittavasavattin* gods (S 1:133, 1:33–34); see Boyd (n. 5 above), pp. 81–84, 111–19; G. P. Malalasekern, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, 2 vols. (London: Pāli Text Society, 1974), 2:613.

22 S 4:38–39: "māro māro ti vuccati. kittāvatā nu kho bhante māro vā assa mārapaññatti vā ti. yattha kho Samiddhi atthi cakkhum atthi rūpā atthi cakkhu-viññāṇaṃ atthi cakkhu-viññāṇa-viññātabbā dhammā, atthi māro vā māra-paññatti vā."

23 Sn 435–39: "tassa m' evaṃ viharato pattass' uttama-vedanaṃ / kāmesu nâpekhate cittaṃ passa sattassa suddhataṃ / / kāmā te paṭhamā senā dutiyā arati vuccati / tatiyā khuppipāsā te catutthī taṇhā pavuccati / / pañcamī thīna-middhaṃ te chaṭṭhâbhīrū pavuccati / sattamī vicikicchā te makkho thambho te aṭṭhamo / / . . . / / esa namuci senā kaṇhassābhippahāraṇī / na naṃ asūro jināti jetvā ca labhate sukhaṃ" (trans. adapted from K. R. Norman, trans., *The Group of Discourses: Revised Translation with Introduction and Notes* [Oxford: Pāli Text Society, 1992]).

24 S 1:124.26–30: "atha kho taṇhā ca arati ca ragā ca māra-dhītaro yena bhagavā ten' upasaṃkamiṃsu. upasaṃkamitvā bhagavantam etad avocuṃ: pāde te samaṇa paricāremā ti. atha kho bhagavā na manasākāsi yathā taṃ anuttare upadhi-saṃkhaye vimutto." See also Sn 835; Nd 1:181.

25 The fact that the armies of Māra here in part overlap with the five hindrances of sensual desire (*kāma-cchanda*), aversion (*vyāpāda*), tiredness and sleepiness (*thina-middha*), excitement and depression (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*) underlines the point made already about the particular psychological interpretation of Māra in terms of the five hindrances.

26 D 1:215–23.

27 "viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pahaṃ" (D 1:23), interpreted by Buddhaghosa (Sv 2:393) as referring to *nibbāna*.

28 Masefield (n. 5 above). The Upaniṣadic locus classicus for the terms is Bṛhadāraṇyaka 2.3.

29 Masefield, p. 93, n. 32.

30 Abhidh-s 1–5 (*citta-saṃgaha-vibhāga*); cf. Vism 14:83–110.

31 Vibh 422–26; Vism 7:40–44, 13:29–65; Abhidh-s 22–24; Abhidh-k 3:1–3. Theravādin sources enumerate eleven realms in the *kāmadhātu* (four descents, the human realm and six heavens), sixteen in the *rūpadhātu* (three each for the first three *jhāna* realms and seven—including unconscious beings and five Pure Abodes—for the fourth), and four in the *arūpadhātu*; Abhidh-k enumerates ten in the *kāmaloka* (missing is the realm of *asuras* from the descents), seventeen in the *rūpaloka* (exchanging unconscious beings for two further basic fourth *dhyāna* realms), and four in the *arūpaloka*; *bhāṣya* to Abhidh-k 3:2b–d records that the Kaśmīris accepted only sixteen realms in the fourth *dhyāna* while La Vallée Poussin, trans. (n. 2 above), 2:3, n. 1, records a number of other slight variations in the northern sources.

32 Abhidh-av 182–289 ("bhūmi-puggala-vasena cittuppatti-niddeso").

33 The kind of consciousness that is characteristic of a being is essentially a function of a being's *bhavaṅga-citta*; see R. Gethin, "*Bhavaṅga* and Rebirth in the Abhidhamma," in *The Buddhist Forum*, vol. 3 (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1995), pp. 11–35.

34 Vibh 426; Abhidh-s 24.

35 See Vibh 135–92; Vibh-a 199–200; *bhāṣya* to Abhidh-k 3:24 (La Vallée Poussin, trans., 2:65–66); cf. R. Gethin, *The Buddhist Path of Awakening: A Study of the Bodhi-Pakkhiyā Dhammā* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), p. 351.

36 Quite what constitutes a "world-system" is not clear. The term *cakkavāḷa* does not appear to occur in the four primary Nikāyas. Strictly a *cakkavāḷa* (cf. Skt *cakravāla* and Buddhist Sanskrit *cakravāḍa*) refers to the range of mountains surrounding the world; the term is then used to refer to a single "world-system" as constituted by the various realms that make up the world of sense-desire; Buddhaghosa says that there are an infinite number of such world-systems (Vism 7:40–44). The term used as a gloss for *cakkavāḷa* by Buddhaghosa here is *loka-dhātu*, which seems to be the preferred term in the Nikāyas. Thus the Aṅguttara Nikāya (5:59–60) talks of a Mahābrahmā ruling over a thousand such world-systems, while the Majjhima Nikāya (3:101–2) talks of Brahmās ruling over as many as a hundred thousand world-systems. It thus seems that world-systems that are distinct and self-contained at the lower realms of existence are not necessarily so at higher levels of existence. However, Buddhist tradition does not conclude that one should therefore talk of there being only one all-embracing Brahma-world. In fact, A 5:59 already talks in terms of thousands of Brahma-worlds, and the ancient conception of the thousandfold world-system, the twice-thousandfold world-system (embracing 1 million world-systems), and the thrice-thousandfold world-system (embracing 1 trillion world-systems according to Pāli sources and 1 billion according to northern) (see A 1:227–28, Mp 2:340–41, Abhidh-k 3:73–74) seems to imply a kind of pyramidal structure of world-systems: units of thousands of world systems (i.e., sense-sphere world-systems) are governed by a Mahābrahmā, and units of a thousand such Brahma realms are in turn governed by Brahmās of yet higher realms, and so on. Whatever, as the *Atthasāḷinī* says (pp. 160–61), there is no end to the hundreds and thousands of world-systems: if four Mahābrahmās in Akaniṭṭha were to set off at a speed which allowed them to traverse a hundred thousand world-systems in the time it takes a swift arrow to pass over the shadow of a palm tree, they would reach *nibbāna* without ever seeing the limit of world-systems.

37 Sv 1:110; Vism 13:30; *bhāṣya* to Abhidh-k-bh 3:90c–d.

38 Vism 13:32–55; Abhidh-k-bh 3:89–90, 100–102; cf. Reynolds and Reynolds (n. 6 above), pp. 305–27.
39 Vism 13:31, 40–41, 55.
40 Vism 13:55–62 describes destruction by fire, water, and wind; Vism 13:65 and Abhidh-k-bh 3:102 detail the sequence and frequency of destruction by these three elements and are in complete agreement: seven cycles of seven destructions by fire followed by one by water (fifty-six destructions); followed by one cycle of seven destructions by fire followed by one by wind (sixty-four destructions); thus the Brahmās who live in the Subhakiṇha/Śubhakṛtsnā realms—the highest of the third *jhāna/dhyāna* realms—have a life span of sixty-four aeons.
41 Vism 13:33–35: "jhānaṃ vinā natthi brahma-loke nibbatti; etesañ ca keci dubbhikkha-piḷitā keci abhabbā jhānâdhigamāya. te kathaṃ tattha nibbattantī ti. devaloke paṭiladdha-jhāna-vasena. tadā hi vassa-sata-sahassass' accayenn kappuṭṭhānaṃ bhavissatī ti. loka-byūhā nāma kāmâvacara-devā mutta-sirā vikiṇṇa-kesā ruda-mukhā assūni hatthehi puñchamānā ratta-vattha-nivatthā ativiya virūpa-vesa-dhārino hutvā manussa-pathe vicarantā evaṃ ārocenti: mārisā mārisā ito vassa-sata-sahassassa accayena kappa-vuṭṭhānaṃ bhavissati; ayaṃ loko vinassissati, mahā-samuddo pi ussussissati, ayañ ca mahā-pathavī sineru ca pabbata-rājā uḍḍayhissanti vinassissanti, yāva brahma-lokā loka-vināso bhavissati. mettaṃ mārisā bhāvetha, karuṇaṃ muditaṃ upekkhaṃ mārisā bhāvetha, mātaraṃ upaṭṭhahatha pitaruṃ upaṭṭhahatha, kule jeṭṭhāpacāyino hothā ti. tesaṃ vacanaṃ sutvā yebhuyyena manussā ca bhumma-devatā ca saṃvega-jātā aññamaññaṃ mudu-cittā hutvā mettâdīni puññāni karitvā deva-loke nibbattanti. tatha dibba-sudhā-bhojanaṃ bhuñjitvā vāyo-kasiṇe parikammaṃ katvā jhānaṃ paṭilabhanti. tad-aññe pana aparāpariya-vedanīyena kammena deva-loke nibbattanti. aparāpariya-vedanīya-kamma-rahito hi saṃsāre saṃsaranto satto nāma natthi. te pi tattha tath' eva jhānaṃ paṭilabhanti. evaṃ deva-loke paṭiladdha-jjhāna-vasena sabbe pi brahma-loke nibbattantī ti."
42 On *aparāpariya-vedanīya-kamma*, see Vism 19:14, Abhidh-s 5:52, Abhidh-s-ṭ 131–32.
43 Sv 1:110: "yebhuyyenā ti ye upari brahma-lokesu vā āruppesu vā nibbanti, tadavasese sandhāya vuttaṃ."
44 DAṬ 1:201: "āruppesu vā ti vā-saddena saṃvattamāna-lokadhātūhi añña-lokadhātesu vā ti vikappanaṃ veditabbaṃ. na hi sabbe apāya-sattā tadā rūpārūpa-bhavesu uppajjantī ti sakkā viññātuṃ, apāyesu dīghatamâyukānaṃ manussalokuppattiyā asambhavato." The fact that the DAṬ comments here in this way when Vism-ṭ fails to make any comment on Buddhaghosa's account of the contraction of the world is perhaps further evidence that the authors of the Nikāya *ṭikās* and Vism-ṭ are not the same; see L. S. Cousins, "Dhammapāla and the Ṭikā Literature," *Religion* 2 (1972): 159–65; P. Jackson, "A Note on Dhammapāla(s)," *Journal of the Pāli Text Society* 15 (1990): 209–11.
45 Compare Kv 476.
46 Abhidh-k-bh 3:89: "yadā narakeṣv eka-sattvo nâvaśiṣṭo bhavati iyatāyaṃ lokaḥ saṃvṛtto bhavati / yaduta naraka-saṃvarttanyā / yasya tadānīṃ niyataṃ naraka-vedanīyaṃ karma dhriyate sa lokadhātv-antara-narakeṣu kṣipyate."
47 This is stated by way of explanation of the last of three ways in which *dhyāna* belonging to the *rūpadhātu* may be produced: by the force of conditions (*hetu*), defined as repeated practice (*ābhīkṣṇâbhyāsa*), by the force of karma leading to rebirth in a higher realm coming to fruition, and also by the nature of things (*dharmatā*) (Abhidh-k-bh 8: 38c-d: "rūpadhātau dhyānotpādanam etābhyāṃ ca hetu-karma-balābhyāṃ dharmatayâpi ca saṃvartanī-kāle. tadānīṃ hi sarva-sattvā evādhara-bhūmikās tad dhyānam utpādyanti kuśalānāṃ dharmāṇām udbhūta-vṛttitvāt.")

48 Vyākhyā to Abhidh-k-bh 8:38c–d: "upadeśam antareṇâyataḥ pūrva-dhyāna-vāsanāyāṃ satyām dhyānotpattir iti."

49 Although composed in Pāli, the *Lokapaññatti* appears to be based directly on Sanskrit traditions rather than the traditions of the Sri Lankan Theravāda; it corresponds closely to the *Lokaprajñapti* translated into Chinese by Paramārtha in 558 C.E. (Denis, trans. and ed. [n. 6 above], 2:ii). The position recorded here on what happens to hell beings at the time of the contraction of a world-system appears to reflect exactly the position of Paramārtha's translation of the *Lokaprajñapti* (Denis, trans. and ed., 1:194, 2:225–26).

50 Reynolds and Reynolds (n. 6 above), p. 308.

51 The Nikāyas and Āgamas for their part prefer to speak of the length of time beings will suffer in hell realms by way of simile rather than specific numbers of years or aeons (see Kokāliya-sutta, S 1:149–53; A 5:170–74; Sn 123–31; cf. bhāṣya to Abhidh-k 3:84). Vibh 422:26, which deals with age limits in the various realms of existence, says nothing about the hell realms, and begins with the human realm; the commentary (Vibh-a 521) states that *kamma* is what determines the life span of beings in the descents—as long as *kamma* is not exhausted beings do not pass from those realms; the *Anuṭīkā* apparently adds (see Ñāṇamoli, trans., *The Dispeller of Delusion*, 2 vols. (London: Pāli Text Society, 1987–90), 2:299, n. 7) that the life span in Avīci is an *antarakappa* (a sixty-fourth of a *mahākappa*). Abhidh-s 23 (chap. 5, verse 21) states that there is no definite age limit for beings in the four descents and for humans; the length of time spent in these realms is dependent on the specific *kamma* that brought about the rebirth. As far as human beings are concerned this comment seems to be made with reference to the tradition—found in the Cakkavattisīhanāda-sutta (D 3:58–79) and Mahâpadāna-sutta (D 2:1–54)—that the life span of humans varies from ten years to 80,000 years at different periods within an aeon, and thus does not mean that humans can outlive the aeon. Vasubandhu too states (Abhidh-k 3:83) that the life span of beings in Avīci is one *antarakalpa* (an eightieth of a *mahākalpa* according to northern tradition). Malalasekera (n. 21 above) comments (s.v. Avīci, Devadatta) that Devadatta is destined to suffer in Avīci for 100,000 aeons, but the source he cites (Dhp-a 1:148) strictly says only that at the end of 100,000 aeons Devadatta will become a *paccekabuddha*, and not that he will spend that period continuously in Avīci.

52 D 1, passim; M 1:178–84, 344–48, 3:33–36, 134–37; cf. M 1:267–71. See Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening* (n. 35 above), pp. 207–8.

53 D 1:75–76: "so imam eva kāyaṃ parisuddhena cetasā pariyodātena pharitvā nisinno hoti."

54 At M 3:36 there is just one attainment. The attainments are the eight vijjās (Vism 7:20), the last six of which are often referred to as *abhiññā* (e.g., D 3:281) and the last three as *vijjā* (e.g., M 1:482).

55 D 1:76–83 (passim): "evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodate anaṅgaṇe vigatupakkilese mudubhūte kammaniye ṭhite ānejjappatte."

56 D 1:84: "khīṇā jāti vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ nāparaṃ itthattāyā ti."

57 S. J. Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 49–52. Tambiah confusingly describes the Ābhassara realm as *arūpa* at one point and creates, to my mind, a rather misleading "dyadic opposition between material states and formless states."

58 *Bhāṣya* to Abhidh-k 3:100c–d: "prathame hi dhyāne vitarka-vicārā apakṣālāḥ / te ca manasaḥ paridāhakatvād agni-kalpāḥ / dvitīye prītir apakṣātā / sā praśrabdhi-yogenāśraya-mṛdu-karaṇād ap-kalpā / . . . / tṛtīye dhyāne āśāsa-praśvāsāḥ / te ca vāyava eva / iti yasyāṃ dhyāna-samāpattau yathābhūta ādhyātmiko 'pakṣālaḥ tasyāṃ dhyānopapattāu tathābhūto bāhya iti" (cf. Abhidh-dī 115–16).

59 Incidentally, this way of looking at the progress of the practice of meditation as a return to a kind of primordial state is not without parallels elsewhere in Indian tradition. The practice of yoga as presented in the *Yoga-sūtras* of Patañjali is also essentially a species of return: a reversal of the stages of the evolution of the *tattvas* from *prakṛti*. Thus the full manifestation of *prakṛti* with the appearance of the five senses and their respective objects is what characterizes ordinary human consciousness; by the practice of *samādhi* the *yogin* gradually, stage by stage, regains the primordial equilibrium of the three *guṇas* in unmanifest *prakṛti*. The knowledge that discriminates between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* can then be achieved.

60 Vasubandhu does, however, designate the realms of the *rūpadhātu* as "places" or "locations" (*sthāna*); the *ārūpyadhātu*, on the other hand, is without location (*asthāna*). This would seem to be because to the extent that beings of the *rūpadhātu* possess *rūpa-skandha* (they possess the senses of sight and hearing) they must have location. Compare Abhidh-k 2:2–3, 7:3; Y. Karunadasa, *The Buddhist Analysis of Matter* (Colombo: Department of Cultural Affairs, 1967), pp. 161–62.

61 For example, Vism 10; one should note here that in certain contexts (e.g., Abhidh-s 5; Nārada, trans., *A Manual of Abhidhamma* [Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1980], p. 64) the four formless attainments are treated simply as modifications of the fourth (or, according to the Abhidhamma reckoning, fifth) *jhāna*.

62 Vism 12:2, 12–13, 58; Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening* (n. 35 above), p. 102.

63 D 2:156.

64 P. M. Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 98.

65 Both these expressions are connected with another expression of this theme, namely, the Sautrāntika theory of "seeds"; cf. P. S. Jaini, "The Sautrāntika Theory of *Bīja*," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 22 (1959): 237–49.

66 Vism 22:56–57; Malalasekera (n. 21 above), s.v. "suddhāvāsā"; Marasinghe (n. 5 above), p. 262; Abhidh-k-bh 6:42–44 (La Vallée Poussin, trans. [n. 2 above], 4:221–28).

67 Tattvasaṅgraha 2:1107 (vv. 3549–50): "pañcagaty-ātma-saṃsāra-bahir-bhāvān na martyatā / buddhānām iṣyate 'smābhir nirmāṇaṃ tu tathā matam / / akaniṣṭhe pure ramye 'śudhâvāsa-vivarjite / budhyante tatra sambuddhā nirmitas tv iha budhyate." I read *ramye 'śuddhāvāsavivarjite* for Shastri's *ramye śuddhāvāsavivarjite*, although a Tibetan translation of apparently the same verse does not recognize the sandhi: "Rejecting the pure abodes, he rightly and completely awakened in the ecstatic abode of Akaniṣṭha." (See *mKhas grub rje's Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras*, trans. F. D. Lessing and A. Wayman [The Hague: Mouton, 1968], pp. 22–23.) The implication that the Akaniṣṭha realm is somehow apart from the pure abodes is surely problematic, while the phrase "akaniṣṭha-bhavane divye sarva-pāpa-vivarjite" (Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra 269.4) would seem to confirm my emendation.

68 Tattvasaṅgraha 2:1107: "naraka-preta-tiryag-deva-manuṣya-bhedena pañcagaty-ātmakaḥ saṃsāraḥ tad-bahir-bhūtāś ca buddhā bhagavata ity asiddhaṃ martyatvam eṣām / kathaṃ tarhi śuddhodanâdi-kulotpattir eṣāṃ śrūyate / ity āha nirmāṇam tu tathā matam iti / etad evâgamena saṃspandyann āha akaniṣṭha ity ādi / akaniṣṭha nāma devāḥ teṣām ekadeśe śuddhāvāsa-kāyikā nāma devāḥ / atra hy āryā eva śuddhā āvasanti / teṣām upari maheśvara-bhavanaṃ nāma sthānam / tatra carama-bhavikā eva daśabhūmi-pratiṣṭhitā bodhisattvā utpadyante / iha tu tad-ādhipatyena tathā nirmāṇam upalabhyata ity āgamaḥ" (cf. G. Jha, trans., *The Tattvasaṅgraha of Shāntarakṣita with the Commentary of Kamalashila*, 2 vols. [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986], 2:1547; Williams, pp. 180–81).

69 Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra 269.4–9, 361.1–6: "akaniṣṭa-bhavane divye sarva-pāpa-vivarjit / nirvikalpāḥ sadā yuktaś citta-caitta-vivarjitāḥ / / balâbhijñā-vaśi-prāptāḥ tat-samādhi-

gatiṃgatāḥ / tatra budhyanti sambuddhā nirmitas tv iha budhyate / / nirmāṇa-koṭyo hy amitā buddhānāṃ niścaranti ca / sarvatra bālāḥ śṛṇvanti dharmaṃ tebhyaḥ pratiśrutvā / / . . . kātyāyanasya gotro 'haṃ śuddhâvāsād vinissṛtaḥ/ deśemi dharmaṃ sattvānāṃ nirvāṇa-puragāminam / / paurāṇikam idaṃ vartma ahaṃ te ca tathāgathāḥ / tribhiḥ sahasraiḥ sūtrāṇāṃ nirvāṇam atyadeśayan / / kāma-dhātau tathārūpye na vai buddho vibudhyate / rūpa-dhātvakaniṣṭheṣu vīta-rāgeṣu budhyate."

70 É. Lamotte, trans. *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse de Nāgārjuna (Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra)*, 5 vols. (Louvain: Bibliothèque du Musèon and Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste, 1944–80), 5:2431–32, 2438, 2442–43; E. Conze, trans., *The Large Sūtra on Perfect Wisdom with the Divisions of the Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979), p. 165. Eighth-stage Bodhisattvas are here described as enjoying the play of the higher knowledges (*abhijñākriḍanatā*), seeing Buddha fields (*buddha-kṣetradarśanatā*), and producing their own Buddha fields in accordance with what they have seen ("teṣāṃ buddha-kṣetrāṇāṃ yathā-dṛṣṭānāṃ sva-kṣetra-pariniṣpādanata"). The commentarial **Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* (see Lamotte, trans., 5:2433–35, 2439, 2444) fills this out and explains that at the eighth stage the Bodhisattva sees the bodies of the Buddhas as "creations" (*nirmāṇa*), and that he accomplishes the concentration that fills the universe with his own magical creations, like a magician producing apparitional armies, palaces, and cities; from now on he knows the precise circumstances of any new birth he will assume. During the ninth stage he is a Bodhisattva in his last existence (*caramabhavika*); finally, seated beneath the tree of enlightenment, he at last enters into the tenth stage, the stage of the Cloud of Dharma (*dharma-meghā bhūmi*). The *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* here appears to impose the standard nomenclature of the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* on the ten *bhūmis* of the Prajñāpāramitā, despite the fact that the details of the *Daśabhūmika* scheme are manifestly different.

71 Daśabhūmikasūtra 94.20–95.6: "yasyāṃ pratiṣṭhito bodhisattvo bhūyastvena maheśvaro bhavati deva-rājaḥ." Compare Daśabhūmīśvaro 199.2–5; T. Cleary, trans., *The Flower Ornament Scripture: A Translation of the Avatamsaka Sutra*, 3 vols. (Boston: Shambala, 1984–87), 2:111.

72 Lalitavistara 79.6–7: "jāta-mātrasya bodhisattvasya maheśvaro deva-putraḥ śuddhāvāsa-kāyikān deva-putrān āmantryaivam āha." G. Bays, trans., *The Lalitavistara Sūtra: The Voice of the Buddha: The Beauty of Compassion*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: Dharma, 1983), 1:164. See also F. Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1953), s.v. "maheśvara." The *Lalitavistara's* account of the Pure Abodes is interesting in itself. The *Lalitavistara* begins with the Buddha attaining a *samādhi* called "the manifestation of the ornaments of a Buddha" (*buddhālaṃkāravyūha*) (Bays, trans., p. 2); the lights that subsequently issue from his body attract the attention of various gods of the Pure Abodes who come to him and request the Buddha to teach the *Lalitavistara*, a teaching that "cultivates the skillful roots of the Bodhisattva" (*bodhisattva-kuśala-mūla-samudbhāvana*) (p. 3). The gods of the Pure Abodes lead the way in coming to honor the newly born Bodhisattva (p. 79) while later they create the four omens that prompt the Bodhisattva to go forth (p. 136). Nobuyoshi Yamabe has drawn my attention to Lamotte, trans., 1:519, which associates tenth-stage Bodhisattvas called Maheśvaradevarājas with the Pure Abodes.

73 Daśabhūmikasūtra 90.11–15: "dharma-meghāyāṃ bodhisattva ekasyām api lokadhātau tuṣita-vara-bhavana-vāsam upādāya cyavanācaṅkramaṇa-garbhasthiti-janmâbhini-ṣkramaṇâbhisambodhy-adhyeṣaṇa-mahādharmacakra pravartana-mahāparinirvāṇa-bhūmir iti sarva-tathāgata-kāryam adhitiṣṭhati" (cf. Daśabhūmīśvaro 191.6–8; Cleary, trans., 2:107).

74 Daśabhūmikasūtra 91.4–7, 14–18: "ākāṅkṣann ekavālapatha ekasarvabuddhaviṣa-

yavyūham ādarśayati / ākāṅkṣan yāvad anabhilāpyān sarvākārabuddhaviṣayavyūhān ādarśayati / ākāṅkṣan yāvanty abhilāpyāsu lokadhātuṣu paramāṇurjāṃsi tāvata ātmabhāvān ekakṣaṇalavamuhūrtena nirmīte /.../ cittotpāde ca daśadikspharaṇaṃ gacchati / cittakṣaṇe cāpramāṇā abhisambodhīr yāvan mahāparinirvāṇavyūhān adhitiṣṭhati / ... / svakāye cāpramāṇānāṃ buddhānāṃ bhagavatāṃ aprameyān buddhakṣetraguṇavyūhān adhitiṣṭhati" (cf. Daśabhūmīśvaro 192.11–13, 193.3–6; Cleary, trans., 2:108).

75 Lessing and Wayman, trans. (n. 67 above), pp. 16–39.

76 Ibid., p. 27. See also T. Skorupski, "Śākyamuni's Enlightenment according to the Yoga Tantra," *Sambhāṣā (Nagoya University, Indian Buddhist Studies)* 6 (1985): 87–94.

77 See M 1:21–24.

78 See, e.g., Abhidh-s 2 on "motivationless consciousness" (*ahetuka-citta*) and Abhidh-s chap. 4, on the "consciousness process" (*citta-vithi*); cf. L. S. Cousins, "The Paṭṭhāna and the Development of the Theravādin Abhidhamma," *Journal of the Pāli Text Society* (1981), pp. 22–46.

79 See, e.g., J. Varenne, *Yoga and the Hindu Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 127–63; J. Brereton, "The Upaniṣads," in *Approaches to the Asian Classics*, ed. W. T. de Bary and I. Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 115–35.

80 S 1:62 = A 2:48: "nâhaṃ taṃ gamanena lokassa antaṃ ñāteyyaṃ daṭṭheyyaṃ patteyyan ti vadāmi ti. na kho panāhaṃ āvuso appatvā lokassa antaṃ dukkhass' antakiriyaṃ vadāmi. api khvāhaṃ āvuso imasmiṃ yeva vyāmamatte kaḷevare saññimhi samanake lokaṃ ca paññāpemi loka-samudayaṃ ca loka-nirodhaṃ ca loka-nirodha-gāminiṃ ca paṭipadaṃ."

81 Meisig (n. 2 above).

82 See n. 2 above.

83 See Meisig, p. 68.

84 Richard Gombrich, "The Buddha's Book of Genesis?" *Indo-Iranian Journal* 35 (1992): 159–78; see also his *Theravāda Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988), p. 85.

85 Gombrich, "The Budda's Book of Genesis?" pp. 163, 161.

86 Steven Collins, "The Discourse on What Is Primary (Aggañña-Sutta): An Annotated Translation," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 21 (1993): 301–93.

87 Collins, *Selfless Persons* (n. 7 above), pp. 131–38.

24

KINDNESS AND COMPASSION AS A MEANS TO NIRVĀṆA*

R.F. Gombrich

Source: *Kindness and Compassion as a Means to Nirvana.* Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.

The best lectures have the quality of detective stories. The lecturer holds her audience's attention (my use of the feminine pronoun alludes of course to the initiator of this series, Wendy Doniger) by relaying to them all sorts of colourful and intriguing facts, preferably interlarded with jokes, and while they are laughing and gasping they wonder where all this is leading, until in the last few minutes the lecturer, like a conjuror, produces the rabbit from his top hat in the shape of an unexpected but telling conclusion, a new and convincing way of interpreting his topic. As my friend Lee Siegel has wisely said, 'I try to say something both true and interesting, but if I can't manage that, I'll settle for one of them.'

Even were I capable of presenting such a tour de force, the circumstances of this lecture would have prevented it. The efficient organisers asked more than a year ago not only for the title of my lecture, but for a short resumé of my subject to accompany its announcement. So the rabbit is not only out of the hat but has been lying exposed to your inspection like game on a butcher's slab: the rules of this game preclude surprise.

In this situation I have tried to keep interest alive and to tickle the jaded palates of the many connoisseurs of Indology here today by making a bold claim. As my title and resumé announce, I wish to argue that the conventional view of the Buddha's message and his place in the history of world religion is wrong: that far from preaching that the only solution to life's problems lay in eliminating emotion, he was the person who found a way to salvation *through* emotion, albeit emotion purified of selfishness; that the common accusation that early Buddhism is inherently selfish could hardly be wider of the mark; and that it was the Buddha who introduced love and compassion into Indian religion. This claim is at least interesting, so I have met Lee Siegel's minimum requirement. But is it also true?

My conclusion – I would even say discovery – that the Buddha considered

the cultivation of kindness and compassion to be a way (though, please note, not the *only* way) to reach salvation, nirvana, is mentioned, though not given great prominence, in a book I published late last year called *How Buddhism Began*.[1] Predictably, it has already been criticised[2] by the voice of orthodoxy (in this case that of the learned and admirable Bhikkhu Bodhi), repeating the arguments which have obscured my discovery from the world for so many centuries. My position is quite simple, and it will not take very long to tell you of the texts and the reasoning on which I base my view. It has however become clear to me that what needs to be done at some length, even if it is not so much fun, is to justify my approach and explain how I can dare to reach so radical a conclusion and defy established wisdom.

The first thing I have to justify is the mere fact of defying received opinion. Can an outsider tell people about their religion? In academic circles, especially in North America, this has become a suspect activity. The motives for this suspicion are not unworthy. Until recent times our western universities and academies were generally dominated by the locally prevalent form of Christian orthodoxy; the study of religion meant Christian theology; and if other religions were mentioned at all, it was generally to be castigated for their errors. Adherents of non-Christian religions were not invited to present their views, and what is called comparative religion, a subject only about a century old, was frequently vitiated (as still sometimes happens even today) by asking inappropriate questions of other religions, questions based on category mistakes and other misunderstandings. In the United States, a multi-cultural society with an egalitarian ideology, the view has gained ground that people should be allowed to describe their own beliefs and values rather than have those beliefs and values ascribed to them.

This very proper view has however led to some muddled thinking. The ideas and practices of living informants are generally the subject matter of the social sciences, which are far more popular and widely practised in the United States than history or philology. But the history of a faith community or the interpretation of their sacred texts can legitimately raise two quite different kinds of questions. We can ask what their history or their texts *mean to them*, and use their responses as our data – though it is often too readily assumed that those responses will be uniform, that the informants we happen to ask can stand for the entire group. But historians and textual scholars, once they are equipped with the tools of their trade, such as the knowledge of languages, can legitimately ask quite different questions: what did historical events *mean to the original participants*; what did texts mean to those who composed them, or to their earliest audiences? To such questions we are under no obligation to accept the answers of those who stand in the relevant tradition, even though we must be ready to learn from them, as indeed from anyone at all who has anything relevant to tell us.

Besides the widespread ethical distaste for privileging the opinions of what Americans call Caucasian males, intellectual fashion within the narrower circles

of religious studies has swung against what is sometimes called 'the search for origins'. This is a reaction to the theological preoccupation, which began in the middle of the 19th century, with trying to sweep away later accretions to Christianity and search for the 'historical Jesus'. After a while it was observed that for both theoretical and practical reasons this had gone too far: subjects of more immediate relevance, such as what brought people into church, were not receiving sufficient attention. On the other hand, until about the 1950s the few scholars who studied non-Christian religions tended to be more comfortable at their desks with their dictionaries of classical languages than in following religious traditions through the centuries down to modern times – after all, one had to start somewhere. My own academic career began in this reactive mood. I was interested in Theravada Buddhism, and in 1959 began to learn Pali and read secondary sources, but the available material gave me little feeling for what living Theravada Buddhists were like, so I made it my doctoral project to go to Sri Lanka and find out. I was lucky in my timing. The anthropology of Buddhism (especially Theravada Buddhism) was just taking off, and within a few years Gananath Obeyesekere, Melford Spiro and Stanley Tambiah were publishing their great monographs in the field. Thus my first book, *Precept and Practice*,[3] was praised for innovating in what later came to be regarded as a politically correct manner. I was doing the right sort of thing.

But I am restless, if not downright perverse. In the eighties I found that now everyone was doing the right sort of thing, so perhaps it was time to go back to old-fashioned philology, and try to join what seemed to me to be a valuable tradition. Perhaps I might even say 'rejoin', as my initial training was in Latin and Greek. The main defect of this tradition, at least as it has been practised in Britain, seems to me to be its naive positivism. Scholars became virtuosi at emending texts on the basis of their understanding of the author's way of writing, be it grammar, metrics, style or meaning, and they have been meticulous in the collection, recording and analysis of evidence; but sometimes this very virtuosity may lead them astray so that they forget about the hermeneutic circle (if they have ever heard of it) and appear to be unaware that their very knowledge of the rules of the relevant metre, or whatever else is in focus, is based on no more than probabilities established by generations of scholars and editorial decisions. This belief that at least close adherence to the texts will provide a bedrock of certain knowledge is a fallacy. It may well not vitiate the actual work produced, but it does do harm when it inhibits the scholar from being willing to extrapolate from the evidence, from forming hypotheses, in other words from making informed guesses, which can be debated and thus advance the subject.

In turning to the Pali texts, therefore, my aim has been to cultivate the philologists' fine ear for discrepancies and discordances, as well as their scrupulous regard for evidence, while venturing at the same time to put forward ideas which do not have the authority of the established tradition. The tradition and I have the same corpus of evidence, namely the texts, first and foremost the texts in

Pali, the language of the scriptural canon of Theravada Buddhism; but I feel free to reinterpret those texts. In 1989[4] I reinterpreted the evidence in Pali chronicles to argue that the date of the Buddha's death was not 543 B.C., as held in the modern Theravada tradition, or for that matter 483 B.C., a version of that tradition emended by some modern scholars, but about 405 B.C.; and it is worth noting that nobody has yet found a flaw in my argument. In exactly the same way, I think that some of the Pali texts which record the Buddha's sermons have been misinterpreted by tradition, and feel free to say so until my arguments have been refuted.

The exegesis of the Pali canon has not yet advanced much beyond where the exegesis of the Bible stood in the middle of the 19th century, though the Buddhist sources are less complicated. For our purposes it is sufficient to say that there are two relatively homogeneous bodies of source material: the canonical texts, which purport to record the words of the Buddha, and the commentaries, preserved for us in the same Pali language, on those texts.

Let me deal with the commentaries first. Those on the Buddha's sermons are all ascribed to one man, Buddhaghosa, whom we know to have been active in Sri Lanka at the very beginning of the fifth century A.D. Buddhaghosa also wrote a huge book, called *The Path to Purity* (*Visuddhi-magga*), which summarises Theravada Buddhist doctrine in so masterly a fashion that it has remained authoritative to this day. Sometimes the other commentaries refer to *The Path to Purity* for amplification on a topic. Even so, I do not myself think that they are all the work of Buddhaghosa; but that need not concern us today. To what extent Buddhaghosa (with possible colleagues) is the author and to what extent he is the editor of the commentaries may never be fully known, but it is beyond dispute that he often explicitly cites older commentaries, mostly written in Sinhala. These have all been lost, but obviously they take us back earlier than the time of Buddhaghosa himself; one scholar who studied them, E. W. Adikaram,[5] thinks that they were closed in the second century A.D. What the evidence seems to show beyond doubt is that they were not closed earlier than that. According to tradition (embedded in those same commentaries), their substance goes back to the communal rehearsal of the doctrine held just after the Buddha's death, and was brought to Sri Lanka in the middle of the third century B.C. by the group led by Mahinda, the missionaries who introduced Buddhism into the island. Tradition also holds that the texts, including the commentaries, were first written down in Sri Lanka in the first century B.C. The commentaries were probably recorded in Sinhala.

What emerges from all this is that on the one hand the Theravadin tradition of exegesis claims that it stretches right back from the texts we now have to the time of the Buddha himself, a period of about eight hundred years, and I see no reason to consider this implausible. But this is entirely different from positing that over those eight centuries, while the commentaries were transmitted orally (and there is no reason to think that during oral transmission they had the fixity imparted by writing), were translated and edited, nothing of importance was

added, lost or otherwise changed. For that there would surely be no parallel recorded in human history. Nor was there any cultural scruple to inhibit changing the commentaries, for they do not even have the sanctity of being ascribed to the Buddha himself.

What of the texts which are so ascribed? The ones that concern us are the sermons of the Buddha, who lived, I think one can now agree, in the fifth century B.C. The first firm evidence for the use of writing in India dates from the middle of the third century B.C.[6] The texts that record the Buddha's sermons are for the most part narrations in which the Buddha plays the leading role, though in some cases the sermon is ascribed to a leading monk. The tradition holds that the texts of the sermons were formulated at the council held soon after the Buddha's death. They were formulated by Ānanda, the monk who had been the Buddha's personal attendant during the latter half of his forty-five-year preaching career. When Ānanda had formulated the texts, they were rehearsed by all the monks attending the council, thus beginning the tradition of oral preservation of the teachings.

Each Buddhist tradition preserves its own version of exactly what happened at this first council and there is little agreement on the details. However, all do agree that there was an event of this kind, and I do not see how any coherent body of literature could have come into being without some such event. Again, however – and on this point all modern scholars agree – there are certainly texts in the Pali canon which do not go back to the first council. Few of the texts which are so certainly late are among the sermons; but there are even a few sermons which mention people whom we know to have lived after the Buddha.

The body of sermons preserved in Pali is very large: the Buddhists themselves count them as 17,505,[7] a greater number than appears to have come down to us. Most of them are short, and the corpus is full of repetitions and redundancies. Even so, it is a massive body of (mainly) prose literature. Either at the outset or very early on, the body of sermons was divided into four collections and monks and nuns specialised in learning by heart one of the collections (or another part of the canon) in order to preserve it.

The majority of the sermons, though by no means all, are preserved in translations made from Indian languages into Chinese, mostly around the time of Buddhaghosa, eight centuries after the Buddha. The Indian originals of these translations had been separately preserved by other Buddhist traditions or 'schools'. The systematic comparison of these Chinese versions with the Pali versions is still in its infancy; but overall it is clear that despite many discrepancies the degree of agreement is impressive, indeed astonishing.

The corpus of the Buddha's sermons is rich and varied, and it is not always prima facie obvious that he is everywhere saying the same thing. Since he preached for forty-five years and was evidently a man of supreme intelligence and originality, it would indeed be astonishing, unparalleled, and to my mind disappointing if over that span he had done nothing but repeat himself, or indeed had never changed his mind. Needless to say, however, his followers were not

all of such high calibre. Despite the Buddha's explicit disclaimer, they ascribed to him omniscience from the moment of his Enlightenment, so that a change of mind was not admissible. By the same token, he could not be inconsistent. The Buddha was famous for adapting the expression of his message to his audience – a trait which became known later as his 'skill in means' – and commentators used this fact to explain that apparent discrepancies were due to variations in expression made for homiletic purposes; they were merely metaphorical, or some other form of indirect expression.

What we have in the texts, of course, is not a perfect record of the Buddha's intentions, let alone of his actual words, but records of what various monks (and perhaps nuns) believed him to have said and meant. The collection of sermons cannot possibly be ascribed in its entirety to Ānanda or any other single monk. Many monks figure in the texts themselves as interlocutors with the Buddha and with each other, and the texts must in most cases reflect their testimony. These monks and their successors were not merely of diverse character and intelligence; they had been converted as adults from other beliefs and practices, backgrounds which must have coloured their understanding. It is hard for me to conceive how in this great mass of texts we should not hear, even if muted, various voices giving their own opinions of what the Buddha had meant to say. But of course we can fail to hear them if we are determined to be deaf.

As has happened in every learned religious tradition, the exegetes homogenised and systematised the founder's message. The brahminical exegetical tradition made explicit the principle that revealed texts, *śruti*, had only one purport; this was called *eka-vākyatā*. No such principle was explicitly formulated in Buddhism, but one cannot too often stress that in ancient India the brahmin culture was hegemonic and deeply influenced all other traditions – anthropologists, observing this in modern times, have dubbed it 'sanskritization'.[8] I contend that in more ways than have yet been explicated, Buddhism was sanskritized over the centuries of its development in India, and this commentarial homogenisation could be seen as an instance of that process.

This homogenisation is the first of three defects which I find in the Pali exegetical tradition. The second is excessive literalism, a failing that the Buddha himself foresaw and warned against. Once the texts had been formulated, their words were carefully preserved and a technical significance was often ascribed to some quite normal and innocent expression; I have provided several examples of this in my recent book.

The third deficiency in the commentaries, from our point of view, is that they have largely lost the memory of the Buddha's historical context. I have been at pains to show that important aspects of the Buddha's message are formulated in terms set by the early brahminical scriptures, especially the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, both where he agrees and where he disagrees with the brahmins, and that we lose a whole dimension of his meaning if we are unaware of this context and argument.

All these three shortcomings in the traditional Buddhist interpretation of the

Buddha's sermons – homogenisation, literalism, and ignorance of the Upaniṣadic background – are relevant to my argument in this lecture. Moreover, at least the first two of them are to be found within the canonical corpus itself. It is not merely legitimate but necessary for the student of the Pali canon to employ the same alert eye as any other textual critic in order to spot discrepancies. Of course, one must not be hasty in jumping to conclusions: an obscurity or difficulty is not necessarily a discrepancy. One must never forget the editorial principle of *lectio difficilior potior*: it is the difficult reading which is likely to be the original, the easy one an attempt by the tradition to smooth over the difficulty. But the sort of discrepancy I have in mind is when a word or expression in a text sounds odd and seems hard to interpret, but then we find it in another text where it fits the context perfectly; one may then hypothesise that the latter context is the original one and the other is secondary, a later creation.

Such a critical approach is no exact science but a matter of judgement; but this is not to admit the charge put by some conservatives, that any stratification of the canonical texts is 'arbitrary'. Where however I do think that the conservatives have a point is that it turns out that one cannot simply label whole texts as early or late. Passages long or short (Biblical scholars call them 'pericopes') move from text to text, as one might expect in an orally preserved tradition, so that if what can be shown to be a relatively early or late passage appears within a large formal unit, a sermon or a chapter, it does not follow that that whole unit can thereby be labelled correspondingly early or late.

In one of the obscurest of my many obscure articles I gave a fine illustration of the hermeneutics I have just enunciated. The article is called 'Three Souls, One or None: the Vagaries of a Pali Pericope',[9] and concerns an expression, a set of phrases nine words long, which occurs in five texts in the Pali Canon. In only one of these does it make perfectly good sense – a text[10] in which a brahmin is criticising Buddhists. Once lifted out of that original context, the expression looks very strange, as it seems to suggest that ascetics can 'blow out' a self – whereas the Buddhist position is that one has no such 'self' in the first place. Not only do the commentaries on this expression in its secondary contexts have trouble in explaining it: their explanations are themselves discrepant. This seems to be an undeniable case in which neither the canonical corpus nor the commentarial corpus ascribed to Buddhaghosa can be made to yield homogeneous authorial unity; in other words, people who did not fully understand the expression have used it in the creation of canonical texts, and other people who did not understand it have given more than one interpretation of it in the commentaries. I have explained my method; let me now apply it. In the Pali canon[11] there is a poem called the *Metta Sutta*, a title which one could translate 'The text on kindness'. In fact I think that in this and similar contexts the Pali word *sutta* derives from the Sanskrit word *sūkta*, literally 'well spoken', which is a way of referring to a Vedic hymn.[12]

Be that as it may, the Pali text both exemplifies and extols having kind thoughts towards the whole world. It has traditionally been used by Buddhist

meditators, and in modern Sri Lanka it has become for Sinhala Buddhist schoolchildren a kind of functional equivalent to the Lord's prayer, because they recite it every day at school, usually (I believe) at the end of the school day just before going home.

The text has been shown to be in a very archaic metre[13] (which the commentators did not identify), and its expression is sometimes rather clumsy. The first half-verse consists of a sentence which the most learned of modern translators, Prof. K. R. Norman, renders into English as follows:[14]

> 'This is what is to be done by one who is skilful in respect of the good, having attained the peaceful state.'

This translation follows the commentary (which in this case is ascribed not to Buddhaghosa but to Dhammapāla). The text then lists a string of virtues, before changing direction with the famous words, 'May all beings be happy and secure.'

'The peaceful state' is, as the commentator rightly tells us, *nibbāna*, the Buddhist's religious goal. But if that is so, why is the person who has attained *nibbāna* being told what he has to do? Surely he has no more duties? Surely, in fact, Buddhist doctrine holds that one who attains this state must already be perfectly moral, to the extent that he is no longer capable of anything wrong in thought, word or deed?

It was in fact, if my memory serves me, Prof. Norman who first pointed out to me the solution to this puzzle. The Pali word which he has translated 'having attained' is an absolutive, a grammatical form which usually has the meaning 'having done' (where 'done' stands for any verb); but in Pali the infinitive, which is most commonly used to express purpose,[15] can be used as an absolutive. So here that same semantic assimilation would be operating in reverse, and the introductory verse is saying what one has to do *in order to attain* nirvana.

Various virtues are then listed. But most of the poem prescribes how one should love all living beings as a mother loves her own child. 'Towards the whole world one should develop loving thoughts, boundless: upwards, downwards, sideways, without restriction, enmity or rivalry. Standing, walking, sitting or lying, one should be as alert as possible and keep one's mind on this. They call this divine living in this world. Not taking up ideas, virtuous, with perfect insight, by controlling greed for sensual pleasure one does not return to lie in a womb.'

This conclusion to the poem surely corroborates that the whole poem is about how one may become enlightened, not how one will behave after so becoming Moreover, it is natural to interpret 'not returning to lie in a womb' as meaning that one will have escaped altogether from the cycle of rebirth, which is to say that one will have attained nirvana. A scholiast familiar with the full development of Buddhist cosmology could object that there are forms of life, higher than us in the universe, in which rebirth is not via a womb but spontaneous.[16]

Thus it is possible to interpret the end of the poem, if it is taken in isolation, as referring only to escape from the grosser forms of rebirth. But there is no such scope for ambiguity in 'the peaceful state', the phrase at the beginning of the poem. So it seems clear that the purport of the whole poem is that kindness is salvific.

The poem does not clearly state that kindness *alone* will produce salvific results. There is a list of other virtues mentioned at the beginning, and the last verse too speaks of other qualities of great importance, notably insight and self-control. I believe I can prove to you in this lecture that that is in fact the purport of the poem; but I certainly cannot from this poem alone disprove the traditional view of kindness as a less than salvific virtue.

What is that traditional view? There is a set of four states of mind which the Buddha highly commends: kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. How the four relate to each other we can learn from Buddhaghosa: one becomes 'like a mother with four sons, namely a child, an invalid, one in the flush of youth, and one busy with his own affairs; for she wants the child to grow up, wants the invalid to get well, wants the one in the flush of youth to enjoy for long the benefits of youth, and is not at all bothered about the one who is busy with his own affairs.'[17] These four states have two names: they are called 'the boundless'[18] and the *brahma-vihāra*. A *vihāra* came to be the word for a Buddhist monastery – hence the name of the Indian state of Bihar. It means 'monastery' because it means 'a place to stay'. The noun derives from a verb which simply means 'to spend time, to stay', and the noun can just mean 'staying'. What about *brahma*? *Brahman* is a name for the religious goal of the brahmins, the monistic principle posited in the Upaniṣads, texts which convey *brahma-vidyā*, 'knowledge of brahman'. As the monistic principle, *brahman* is neuter, but there is also a masculine Brahman, a supreme god, whom we might regard as a personification of the neuter principle, though historically the development may have been the reverse. The Buddhist term *brahma-vihāra* thus carries an inescapable reference to brahminism, for it means 'staying with *brahman*'. Whether one regards that *brahman* as personal or impersonal, masculine or neuter – since the form of the word allows either interpretation – for a brahmin 'staying with *brahman*' is the ultimate goal, the state of salvation.

The Buddha regularly took brahminical terms and gave them a new meaning. The very word 'brahmin', *brāhmaṇa*, he said should not refer to a person born in a particular family but to someone with certain virtues.[19] One famous sermon, the *Kūṭadanta Sutta*,[20] is mainly devoted to teaching a brahmin that a true sacrifice (*yañña*) does not involve killing any animals, but various kinds of moral action. Indeed, the Buddha even took the brahmin term for ritual action, *karman* in Sanskrit, and said that for him *kamma* (the Pali equivalent) was purely a matter of intention, good or bad.

This last example is particularly telling, because it involves making a word mean its virtual opposite, since *karman* derives from the verb meaning 'to do, to act'. Yet there is no canonical text or commentary that spells out how the

Buddha is taking a brahminical term and using it to mean the opposite. We simply have the Buddha's statement, 'By *kamma* I mean intention,'[21] and the whole edifice of thought built on that foundation.

The tradition is not unaware that the Buddha was often arguing and competing with brahmins; there is a lot of straightforward evidence for that in the canon. When the Buddha attains Enlightenment but is reluctant to preach, the story goes that Brahma himself comes and begs him to favour the world by telling them about the way which he has discovered.[22] The Buddha himself, however, tended to express his disagreements with Brahminism more subtly, and indeed sometimes more humorously.

The four *brahma-vihāra* occur in several canonical texts, but the *locus classicus* is the *Tevijja Sutta*.[23] Indeed, some of the vocabulary and phraseology of the *Metta Sutta* comes straight out of the *Tevijja Sutta*. In that prose text, the Buddha introduces the four *brahma-vihāra* in a narrative context. Two young brahmins are arguing about the direct way to what they call 'companionship with Brahma', and decide to ask the Buddha. This leads to a long conversation, in which the Buddha makes fun of brahmins for claiming to teach the way to a goal they have never seen; he compares this, among other things, to declaring one is in love with a beauty queen without having the faintest idea what she looks like, who she is or where she lives. He contrasts the brahmins who claim to know all their sacred texts, the three Vedas, with the picture they draw of Brahma, whom they claim they will join because they resemble him, and says that on the other hand it is a Buddhist monk who resembles Brahma. His account of the monk's way of life culminates in his saying that the monk permeates every direction with his kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. Thus it appears plausible that at death such a monk 'goes to companionship with Brahma', he says. Convinced by this, the two young brahmins convert to Buddhism.

The traditional interpretation of this text agrees with what I have said about it so far, but takes a literal view of what is meant by companionship with Brahma. Fully developed Buddhist cosmology holds that above the world in which we human beings are at home there are six heavens inhabited by gods; and above them again are heavens of a more rarefied kind inhabited by Brahmas, who are thus super-gods. Even above these heavens there are planes inhabited only by meditating minds. Most, perhaps all, of this cosmology can be unpacked by the historian as a reification of various metaphors. That Brahma is above ordinary gods is a brahminical tenet found in the Upaniṣads, including the very texts to which we can show that the Buddha was reacting.

The fully developed Buddhist cosmology does appear within the canon, but I am extremely sceptical about whether it can be ascribed to the Buddha himself. I am sceptical not only because of the way that the details can be accounted for as a historical development; to show such interest in the structure of the universe goes against the Buddha's explicit message. The world, he said, lies within this fathom-long human carcass;[24] indeed, there are many texts in which he

discourages speculation about or even interest in the physical universe; we should concentrate on our experience of life here and now.

The Buddha says to the two young brahmins that a monk who has boundless kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy or equanimity is, like Brahma, without grasping (*apariggaho* – a word that can also mean 'without possessions') and in full control (*vasavatti* – a word that when applied to a god comes close to meaning omnipotent, but for a monk refers to self-control), and so at death may well (*ṭhānaṃ etaṃ vijjati*) go to join Brahma. There are three possible ways of interpreting this. First, that of the Theravada tradition, which takes it literally to mean that the monk is reborn in Brahma's company, in other words in one of the Brahma worlds posited by its cosmology. I have shown in my recent book[25] that the canonical texts go into further detail but reach inconsistent conclusions, a fact which must itself arouse suspicion.

The second interpretation, of which we have no actual record, would be that of a brahmin, such as the Buddha's original audience, who took it literally in the sense of their own cosmology, the teaching of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* to which the Buddha is responding. That text says that those who have achieved gnosis, the realisation that in essence they are *brahman*, when they die pass beyond the sun to the lighting, and then are conducted to the worlds of Brahman, where they remain. This itself, of course, is interpreted by the brahminical tradition as a metaphorical expression for merging into *brahman*, but that is not how the *Upaniṣad* puts it.

The third interpretation, mine, is that the Buddha was using the brahminical way of putting things as a metaphor for what he saw as the highest goal, the attainment of final emancipation from the round of rebirth. He was using the brahminical description of their *summum bonum*, which was itself couched in metaphorical terms, to describe his own *summum bonum* in precisely analogous metaphorical style. In doing so he was adapting the style of his message to the understanding of his audience, using that 'skill in means' (*upāya-kanśalya*) for which he became so famous.

In all gnostic religions salvation is bound to be a two-stage process: to have the salvific realisation, one has to be alive, and then the ultimate solution comes when life ends. The ideal Upaniṣadic monist understands that he is Brahman, and then becomes Brahman at death; one can neatly express this by bringing out the range of meanings in the English verb 'realise', and saying that he 'realises' his true nature by insight while alive, and makes it real at death. In Buddhism this same dual character of nirvana is expressed by saying that the blowing out of the fires of greed, hatred and delusion while one is still alive leaves a residue of fuel (*sa-upādi-sesa nibbāna*), while the death of such an enlightened person is *nibbāna* with no such residue (*an-upādi-sesa*): there is simply nothing left which could again be ignited with the passions.

So far I have discussed what the *Tevijja Sutta* has to say about this second, final stage of liberation. The monk whose sympathies are boundless is so like Brahma, the Buddha is telling the young brahmins, that at the death of his body

his individuality completely disappears, the boundless having merged into the boundless. But what about the first stage, the moment of realisation?

Here the text provides the most powerful argument of all for my interpretation. I have already published in my book a closer examination of the Pali wording than is suitable for presentation in a lecture of this character; but there is no problem about presenting my main conclusions, even if I have to leave out the detailed evidence.

Why exactly are these four states called 'boundless'? The brahmin ideology held that everyone had the duty to perform certain acts. Primarily the texts were concerned with the duties of brahmin males, and the acts they had to perform were ritual acts. Correct performance of such acts kept one on the rails, as it were, and entailed good results, such as health and prosperity, until at death they ensured rebirth in a heaven. However, just as acts were finite, their results too were finite. The very terminology reveals that agriculture supplies the model: the act is a seed which, if all goes well, produces a harvest – but not an infinite harvest.

Of all the four states, from kindness to equanimity, the Buddha says that when they have been developed, the karma which is finite (*pamāṇa-kataṃ*) no longer remains. No more finite results. That can only mean freedom from rebirth.

But why am I beating about the bush? Each of these four states is called *cetovimutti*, 'liberation of the mind'. Does one need, could one have, anything more explicit?

I think not. But unfortunately the tradition disagrees with me, and obfuscates the whole issue. There are several terms in the canon for the goal, for nirvana, and *vimutti*, 'liberation', is one of the commonest. Sometimes this word is qualified as *ceto-vimutti*, 'liberation of the mind', or *paññā-vimutti*, 'liberation by understanding'. Often these two expressions are found together. In my recent book[26] I have examined the canonical use of these terms in great detail and shown that though they have a slightly different meaning they originally have the same referent: there is, I claim, just one 'liberation', and that is the realisation of nirvāna.

The developed, homogenised tradition, however, disagrees; it claims that there are two grades of *ceto-vimutti*, one of which is permanent and therefore the same as *paññā-vimutti*, 'liberation by insight', and the other of which is temporary, not the real thing. On the one hand, then, the tradition turns *ceto-vimutti* into a technical term, while on the other it claims that it is an *ambiguous* technical term.

The passage which most clearly envisages forms of *ceto-vimutti* which fall short of attaining nirvana is in the *Mahā-vedalla Sutta*.[27] This text is ascribed to Sāriputta, whom tradition holds to have been the greatest master, virtually the founder, of *abbidhamma*, the systematisation of Buddhist doctrine (*dhamma* in the singular) and classification of doctrinally posited entities (*dhamma* in the plural). Near the end of the sermon, Sāriputta mentions the possibility of coming

out of (literally 'arising from') *ceto-vimutti*,[28] in terms which show that it is considered a meditative state. He is then asked whether various *ceto-vimutti* are different terms for the same referent or not. His initial reply suggests that what differentiates them is merely the mental route by which they are attained. However, he then resorts to word-play and says that the irreversible (*akuppā*) *ceto-vimutti* will always be free from passion, hatred and delusion; those 'liberations of the mind' which are not free of them are inferior. In other words, those 'liberations' are temporary states, not true liberation.

How did this strange use of language come about? I think it can be no coincidence that the first kind of temporary 'liberation' with which Sāriputta deals in this passage is precisely the 'boundless' one, and indeed that he quotes the *Tevijja Sutta*. We thus have before us, I believe, an example of early Buddhist debate. In my book I traced the stages of the process by which *ceto-vimutti* came to be differentiated from *paññā-vimutti*; but I did not say much to explain *why* this differentiation came about. I now think that the *Tevijja Sutta*, the very problem we are discussing, may lie at the root of this development. If one assumes that the monk who has cultivated infinite kindness literally goes to join Brahma when he dies, it follows from Buddhist cosmology that he has not been liberated and that the release of his mind can only have been temporary. Thus the *Tevijja Sutta*, if it is not to contradict itself within a few lines, must be taken by the literal-minded interpreter as proof that the word *ceto-vimutti* does not refer to definitive liberation.

There is also a more general reason why it may have been denied that *vimutti* in the *Tevijja Sutta* could refer to liberation. When the Buddha's teachings were systematised, nirvana had to be clearly defined, and the leading definition was that it was the same as the total elimination of passion (or greed), hatred and delusion. Those who adhered to this (quite unexceptionable) formulation were reluctant to accept that an account of nirvana which made no mention of eliminating passion, hatred and delusion could really be saying what it purported to say. Among such literalist interpreters, evidently, was Sāriputta, or rather the person who put those words into his mouth while formulating the *Mahā-vedalla Sutta*.

Developed Buddhist doctrine insists that the final step to liberation as taught by the Buddha consists of a gnosis with a specific content, an insight into the nature of the phenomenal world as being impermanent, dissatisfying and without essence. According to this view, there is a progression: morality, concentration, understanding; and each of these three factors is a pre-requisite for the next. The four boundless states are classified as forms of concentration, not of understanding, so they cannot be part of the culminating gnosis.

I am unconvinced by the rigidity of this view, even though it is fundamental to the Theravadin tradition. I am not denying for a moment that it may well go back to the Buddha himself; but then so may other formulations with an equal claim to authenticity. For example, take the noble eightfold path. This is enunciated in what is supposed to have been the Buddha's first sermon. It does not

follow the progression 'morality, concentration, understanding', but ends with the stage of 'right concentration'. The fact that concentration comes eighth on a path, which must be a metaphor for a progression, has to be explained away by the exegetes with tortuous argument. Or take another example. Another text[29] has the Buddha say that where there is morality there is understanding, and vice versa, and that they purify each other just like the process of washing one's hands. This is in fact first said by a brahmin called Soṇadaṇḍa, but he is enunciating a position to which he has been driven back by the Buddha and the Buddha repeats his words to approve them.

All these formulations, I repeat, seem to me to have an equal claim – a perfectly good one – to authenticity. I suspect that if someone had taxed the Buddha with thus being inconsistent in his account, he would have told them not to be silly. Similarly, I very much doubt that it was the Buddha who classified the four boundless states as coming into the category of concentration as opposed to morality or understanding. Why should they not be considered to come into all three categories?

Let me summarise my interpretation of the *Tevijja Sutta* in terms which show how the boundless states may be considered to partake of morality, concentration *and* gnosis.

According to the Upaniṣads, every significant act brings its result, but that result is finite. To escape this finitude requires gnosis; gnosis leads one to join *brahman*, that which pervades the entire universe as consciousness.[30]

The Buddha answers that the Buddhist monk pervades the universe with his consciousness, but it is an ethicised consciousness. In enlarging his mind to be (metaphorically) boundless, he emulates the brahmin gnostic who identifies with universal consciousness, and goes one better, showing the brahmin what he really should be doing. This moral activity is a kind of activity not envisaged by brahminism, for it has transcended finitude; it is at the same time a meditation, a harnessing of the mind, and a gnosis, a limitless illumination, albeit not so expressed in the usual apophatic terms.

In my book[31] I have supplied further corroborative evidence for my interpretation of the *Tevijja Sutta* by discussing another text[32] in the Pali canon in which King Pasenadi consults the Buddha and the Buddha recasts something said in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* to make it mean that one should be kind, substituting an ethical for a metaphysical message. However, rather than repeat what I have published elsewhere, let me amplify my argument in a different direction.

There are quite a few indications in the Buddhist tradition that the literalism of the Theravadin tradition has left infinite kindness and compassion with too humble a role, that the spirit of the tradition is uncomfortable with the letter of the texts as it interprets them. It is well known that in the Mahāyāna the Buddha has both infinite wisdom and infinite compassion; they complement each other exactly like morality and understanding in the *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta*. The same is however said by Buddhaghosa in the *Visuddhi-magga*, when he expounds the Buddha's quality as 'perfect in knowledge and conduct'. 'He knows through

omniscience what is good and harmful for all beings, and through compassion he warns them of harm and exhorts them to do good . . . so that his disciples are on the good way, not on the bad way like the disciples of those imperfect in knowledge and conduct, who do things like mortifying the flesh.'[33] There is a long commentary on this, which says things like: 'It was through understanding that he felt revulsion for the round of rebirths, and through compassion that he bore it. It was through understanding that he fully understood others' suffering, and through compassion that he undertook to counteract it . . . It was through understanding that he himself crossed over, and through compassion that he brought others across.'[34]

Even more striking is the way in which Buddhaghosa ends chapter IX of the *Visuddhimagga*, the chapter on the four *brahma-vihāra*. Constrained no doubt by canonical texts, he has just explained exactly how high in the universe each of the four states in turn can take you. However, he then says that they 'bring to perfection' all the other good qualities of a Buddha, here called a 'Great Being'. He writes: 'For the Great Beings' minds retain their balance by giving preference to beings' welfare, by dislike of beings' suffering, by desire for the various successes achieved by beings to last, and by impartiality towards all beings.'[35] And he goes on to apply this to each of the Ten Perfections, the moral qualities which every Buddha is held to bring to their highest pitch. In effect, Buddhaghosa is bypassing the problem of exactly what role the four divine states play in the spiritual development of an ordinary practitioner and saying that for a Buddha they are fundamental.

But what about the ordinary Buddhist practitioner? I suppose the most famous of all Pali canonical texts is the *Dhammapada*, the collection of more than 400 single stanzas on morality. I find it strange that number 368 has not attracted more attention. It says: 'The monk who dwells in kindness, with faith in the Buddha's teaching, may attain the peaceful state, the blissful cessation of conditioning.'

As philologists of Sanskrit or Pali will know, one need not attach much weight to the fact that the verse says 'may attain' (in the optative) rather than 'will attain' in the indicative. Moreover, in the version of this verse preserved in the *Mahāvastu*[36], a text of another school which is generally considered old, i.e. to date from before the Christian era, the verb *is* in fact in the indicative (*adhigacchati*). The verse is in fact saying that kindness is salvific, and it is surely no coincidence that the term for nirvana, 'the peaceful state', is the same as that used at the opening of the *Metta Sutta*. Thus the author of the *Dhammapada* verse apparently interprets the *Metta Sutta* to mean that it is kindness which will get one to nirvana. Tradition holds, of course, that the author of both poems is the Buddha himself.

In my published summary of this lecture, I referred to the common misconception that the Mahāyāna came into being as a protest against the alleged selfishness of Theravada Buddhism, and mentioned that a similar accusation already appears in the Pali Canon in the mouth of a brahmin. This occurs in a text to

which I have already referred.[37] A brahmin called Saṅgārava says that brahmins who carry out and institute sacrifices are thereby gaining a merit which benefits more than one body. (Presumably he means that they benefit both the priest and the clients, and also that they can affect more than one life, since they take one to heaven after death.) By contrast, says Saṅgārava, a person who renounces the world and acquires selfcontrol benefits himself alone. To this the Buddha replies that by preaching the truth that he has discovered he puts hundreds of thousands of beings on the same path, and he gets Saṅgārava to agree that he thus benefits very many people.

The Mahāyāna emphasises the virtue of compassion, the second in the set of four boundless states, while the Theravada tends rather to speak of the first, kindness. This is hardly more than a purely verbal difference. Moreover, Mahāyāna exegesis presents as the supreme case of compassion the fact that the Buddha took the trouble to preach the truth that he discovered, thus enabling living beings to find an escape from suffering. In a series of lectures at Oxford, Prof. Takasaki Jikido showed that this interpretation of the Buddha's supreme compassion is consistent throughout the history of Indian Buddhism. He did not cite the conversation with Saṅgārava, in which the word compassion (*karuṇā*) is not specifically mentioned; but it carries the same message.

I am not denying that the Mahāyāna as such, by recommending that everyone aim to attain both omniscience and perfect compassion, laid enormous stress on altruism; nor am I denying that the Theravada tradition as displayed in doctrinal texts has comparatively little to say about kindness and compassion. However, I hope to have demonstrated that there are texts in the Pali canon which not only commend kindness but value it so highly that it can be a means to attaining nirvana.

Is this kindness what Christians mean by 'love', or is it merely benevolence? This is an important question, but I doubt whether it admits of a definitive answer. The two texts I have mainly discussed, the *Metta Sutta* and the *Tevijja Sutta*, refer only to thoughts; I quoted the *Metta Sutta* saying 'One should keep one's mind on this.' This is perhaps not surprising if one recalls that the Buddha assumed that anyone who took his message seriously would become a monk or nun and try to live in meditative seclusion. Monks were exhorted, for instance, to tend each other when they were ill, and the Buddha set the example in this. On the other hand the tradition is so conservative that I think it is true that wherever the words kindness and compassion are mentioned in the texts, the reference is to thought, not to acts of kindness – other than preaching.

I would, very tentatively, sum up my impression of early Buddhist kindness as follows. The texts I have cited, and many many others, show a strong preference for negative expression: the monk who dwells with Brahma is free from hatred, free from ill will. The Buddha's advice to King Pasenadi is that everyone loves themselves, so 'one who loves self should not harm others'. It is this, non-harming, that the early texts continually emphasise, rather than positive acts of goodness. Moreover, in the systematic presentation of the Theravadin

abhidhamma, kindness (*metta*) is actually defined negatively, as absence of hatred (*adoso*),[38] while on the other hand it is said to be a component of every morally wholesome (*kusala*) thought,[39] and therefore not necessarily directed at any object.[40] This shows on the one hand that even the systematisers had to leave a fundamental role for kindness, while on the other that they rendered 'kindness' somewhat bloodless.

If one compares Buddhism with Christianity, one notices that Buddhism has no place for righteous anger, and that the Buddhist religious tradition, nobly exemplified in our day by the Dalai Lama, unflinchingly preaches non-violence and pacifism. But let us, here in this Academy, not confuse what Buddhists do with what the Buddha said or meant. The evidence for the latter is clouded and fragmentary. Nevertheless, I feel confident that he was the great ethiciser of Indian religion and hence of a large part of the world, and that he preached an ethic not only of self-restraint but also of love.

Notes

* Pali texts are cited in the editions published by the Pali Text Society.

1 *How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of the Early Teachings*, London 1996.

2 Review in *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 4, 1997, pp. 292–6.

3 First edition Oxford 1971. Revised edition published as *Buddhist Precept and Practice*, Delhi 1991.

4 The article was published in 1992 as 'Dating the Buddha: A Red Herring Revealed', in *The Dating of the Historical Buddha/Die Datierung des historischen Buddha*, Part 2, (*Symposien zur Buddhismusforschung*, iv, 2) ed. Heinz Bechert, Göttingen, pp. 237–259. But in 1989 I sent my article to more than a hundred scholars and began to present my argument in lectures round the world.

5 *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Colombo 1946.

6 Harry Falk, *Schrift in alten Indien: ein Forschungsbericht mit Anmerkungen*, Tübingen 1993.

7 *Sumaṅgala-Vilāsini* 1, 22–23.

8 The term was coined by M. N. Srinivas.

9 *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, vol. II, 1987, pp. 73–8.

10 *Aṅguttara Nikāya* I, 168ff.

11 *Sutta-nipāta* I, 8 = vv. 143–152.

12 There is an early Upaniṣad called the *Maitri Upaniṣad*, and the Sanskrit word *maitri* is the equivalent of the Pali word *mettā*. The Upaniṣad is not about kindness, but it is possible that the Pali title is an allusion to it.

The form of the title requires some further comment. Firstly, it is commonly known as the *Karaṇīyametta Sutta*. *Karaṇiya* is the first word of the text; it means 'to be done', so that that form of the title means 'the 'kindness should be practised' text'. Secondly, the noun *mettā* in Pali is feminine with a long *a*, so why is the final *a* in this title short? I think it comes from the Sanskrit adjective *maitra*, 'friendly'. Within the poem, the word only occurs in verse 8, and here too I think it is adjectival: *mettaṃ mānasaṃ* I take to mean 'friendly thought'.

On this analogy, in the next verse (9) I also see *brahmaṃ* as a *vṛddhi*-ed adjective, from Sanskrit *brāhmya*.

13 L. Alsdorf, *Die Āryā-strophen des Pali-Kanons*, Mainz 1968.

14 *The Group of Discourses* vol. II, Oxford 1992, p. 16.
15 E.g. *daṭṭhu*, *Sutta-nipāta* v. 424.
16 Ordinary gods (*deva*), however, though born spontaneously, are bound at the end of their finite lives to be reborn in a lower state of existence.
17 *Visuddhi-magga* IX, §108, trans. Ñyāṇamoli (*sic*), *The Path of Purification*, 2nd ed., Colombo 1964.
18 *appamāṇa*. However, in the *Metta Sutta* the (synonymous) word is *aparimāṇa*, perhaps because of the exigency of the metre. See Alsdorf, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
19 E.g. *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta* (*Digha Nikāya sutta* IV); *Sutta-nipāta* v. 136.
20 *Digha Nikāya sutta* v.
21 *Aṅguttara Nikāya* III, 415.
22 *Vinaya* I, 5–7.
23 *Digha Nikāya sutta* XIII.
24 *Saṃyutta Nikāya* I, 62.
25 *How Buddhism Began*, pp. 85–6.
26 *Op. cit.*, pp. 96–120.
27 *Majjhima Nikāya sutta* 43.
28 *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 297, lines 4–8.
29 *Digha Nikāya* I, 124.
30 The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* does not seem to suggest that the world does not exist or is an illusion. It is just less real than brahman.
31 *Op. cit.*, pp. 62–4.
32 *Saṃyutta Nikāya* I, 75.
33 *Visuddhi-magga* VII, § 32, trans. Ñyāṇamoli.
34 *Paramattha-mañjūsā* 192, quoted in translation by Ñyāṇamoli, p. 215.
35 *Visuddhi-magga* IX, § 124, trans. Ñyāṇamoli.
36 *Mahāvastu* ed. É. Senart, vol. III, Paris 1897, p. 421, lines 18–19.
37 See note 10 above.
38 *Dhamma-saṅgani* § 1056.
39 *Ibid.* § 1054.
40 I am greatly indebted to Sarah Shaw for drawing my attention to this text.

25

CONCENTRATION OR INSIGHT

The problematic of Theravāda Buddhist meditation theory

Paul Griffiths

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More than forty years ago Louis de La Vallée Poussin wrote: "On peut, sans imprudence, discerner dans les sources Bouddhiques deux théories opposées . . . la théorie qui fait du salut une oeuvre purement ou surtout intellectuelle; la théorie qui met le salut au bout des disciplines ascétiques et extatiques" (1936–37:189–90). He was, if anything, understating the case. It will be the thesis of this paper that not only are there to be found in the Pali sources two distinct and to some degree opposed theories of what salvation is, but that there are also two separate and uneasily combined sets of meditative practices leading to these different goals. This thesis is, of course, nothing new. The Theravāda tradition itself has recognized it since the earliest times and has proposed various ways of combining the two types of meditative practice and reconciling the two soteriological goals. This paper will examine some of these attempts at reconciliation and combination as they appear in the Pali canon and in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, and will argue that from the point of view of the uncommitted observer of the tradition such attempts remain, finally, unsatisfactory. The canonical and commentarial literature will be treated here as a unity, not because of any lack of appreciation of the integrity of each body of literature, but because the thrust of this paper is structural and philosophical rather than historical, and for such purposes differentiation between canon and commentary is of small importance.

Both modern Theravādin apologetic and contemporary Western scholarship have also been aware of this problem, and have suggested various ways of solving—or more often sidestepping—the issue. Some comments will be offered about these attempts in passing, but no comprehensive review will be offered; the emphasis of this paper will be firmly upon the problems apparent in the primary sources. It should be noted at the outset, though, that, despite the creative work which has been done in this field during the last two decades (cf. for

some examples Cousins; Johansson, 1969, 1979; King; Schmithausen, 1976, 1979; Swearer), the questions raised by such pioneers as La Vallée Poussin and Stcherbatsky half a century ago have yet to be given the attention they deserve.

Finally, some suggestions will be made about the wider implications of this problem for our general understanding of what Buddhist soteriology is actually all about.

The Pali sources, then, show quite clearly that there are two different types of meditative practice available to the Buddhist. On the one hand, there is *samādhi/samatha bhāvanā*, and on the other, *vipassanā / paññā bhāvanā*. If we translate *bhāvanā* (a causative form derived from *bhāveti*, meaning "to cause to come to be," "to develop," "to inculcate," "to beget," "to produce," etc.) as "(mental) development" or, more simply, "meditation" – which is clearly what it denotes in this sphere of discourse—then we have a contrast between concentration/tranquillity meditation and insight/wisdom meditation. The whole of the *Visuddhimagga*, essentially a meditation handbook, is arranged under the threefold *sīla-samādhi-paññā* scheme, and we find the distinction between concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*) made also at many points in the canon. We must ask: What are the differences between these two types of meditative practice? What kind of psychological states are they intended to produce? Towards what soteriological goal do they aim the practitioner?

1. Concentrative meditation

Both in the Pali canon and in the *Visuddhimagga* we find precise scholastic definitions of the nature, aims, and techniques involved in this kind of meditative practice. The presentation here will largely follow Buddhaghosa, who in turn follows and systematizes the canonical data. Buddhaghosa defines concentration (*samādhi*) in the following way: "Concentration is skilful one-pointedness of mind (*kusalacittekaggatā*). . . . [It is] the centering (*ādhāna*) of mind and its concomitants (*cittacetasikānaṃ*) evenly and correctly on a single subject (*ekārammaṇe*). Therefore it is that psychological state (*dhamma*) by means of which the mind and its concomitants remain undistracted and unscattered (*avikkhipamānā . . . avipakiṇṇā*) evenly and correctly upon a single object. This is to be understood as the act of concentrating (*idam samādhānan ti veditabbaṃ*)" (Vism. 3.2–3). This is clear enough. Concentrative meditation is a process by which the awareness is narrowed down from its usual wide spectrum to a specific single point (*ekārammaṇa*), just as a searchlight beam can be focused from a very wide and diffuse area of illumination to a small and intense spot of light. This is a kind of meditation designed to exclude unwanted stimuli from awareness, to reduce the content of consciousness, and ultimately to issue in a state in which the mind has no content whatever, in which all sensory input, all perception, and all cognition and intellection have come to a complete halt. This state, at which the practice of concentrative meditation is aimed, is variously labeled in the texts; most commonly it is called *saññā-vedayita-nirodha*, the cessation of

cognition and sensation. *Saññā* means the reception and assimilation of all external stimuli, thus "cognition." *Vedayita* means "what has been felt," not just in the sense of emotional reaction but in the wider sense of all sensation whatever. The state of *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* is also called by the equivalent term *nirodha-samāpatti*, the attainment of cessation. The idea is that the range and content of consciousness is progressively narrowed down by concentrative techniques until it ceases to have any content at all—and the searchlight beam winks out of existence.

This psychological state is mentioned frequently in the canonical texts and in the *Visuddhimagga* (Vism. 23; MN 1.296ff). It is clear also that it is the culminating point of the entire *jhāna system*, a hierarchically arranged series of states of consciousness which are characterized by increasing abstraction and narrowing of the range and content of consciousness until the total cessation of all its activities is attained in the *nirodha-samāpatti*. The nature of this psychological state, the intended aim of *samādhi-bhāvanā*, is made very clear by a debate in MN (Majjhima Nikāya) over the difference between a dead man and one who is in the state of *saññā-vedayita-nirodha*. In the *Mahāvedallasutta* Koṭṭhita interrogates Sāriputta and asks: "What is the difference, reverend one, between that dead thing which is passed away and the monk who has attained the cessation of cognition and sensation (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*)?" (MN 1.296). Sāriputta replies to the effect that in a dead man the activities of the body (*kāyasankhārā*, defined at MN 1.301 as inbreathing and outbreathing), those of speech (*vācāsankhārā*, defined at MN 1.301 as *vitakka-vicāra*), and those of the mind (*cittasankhārā*, defined at MN 1.301 as *saññā-vedayita*) have all ceased, as also have vitality (*āyus*), body heat, and the operations of the sense organs. Sāriputta goes on to say: "But the monk who has attained the cessation of cognition and sensation, although his bodily activities have stopped and subsided, although his vocal activities have stopped and subsided, although his mental activities have stopped and subsided, his vitality is not entirely destroyed, his heat is not allayed, his sense-organs are purified. This, reverend one, is the difference between a dead thing, passed away, and that monk who has obtained the cessation of cognition and sensation" (MN 1.296). We can see from this that the difference between a dead man and one in the state of *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* lies not in what is going on in his head or body—the answer for both, apparently, is nothing—but in his potential for such activities in the future. Death is irreversible, Sāriputta is telling us, and the *nirodha-samāpatti* is not. In modern psychological terminology we might describe *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* as a state of cataleptic trance in which the subject shows no response to external stimuli; the processes of his autonomic nervous system (respiration, heartbeat, etc.) have slowed to an almost imperceptible minimum, and he is incapable of initiating or responding to any action.

Buddhaghosa devotes a considerable amount of space to this psychological state towards the end of the *Visuddhimagga*. Its position in his system will have to be further discussed—he makes it one of the benefits of developing wisdom—

but for the present it is sufficient to point out that he defines the *nirodha-samāpatti* as: *anupubbanirodhavasena cittacetasikānaṃ dhammānaṃ appavatti* (23.18), i.e.: "the non-occurence of states of mind together with their concomitants as a result of successive cessation." Buddhaghosa tells us that this state is only available to nonreturners and *arahants* who have already mastered the "eight attainments," that is, the eightfold *jhāna* system, and who at the same time have their *āsavas* or defilements destroyed and are possessed of the two powers (*dve balāni*), which in their turn are defined as *samatha* (tranquillity) and *vipassanā* (insight). The attainment of *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* is explicitly denied to all those—even *arahants*—who are *sukkhavipassaka*, that is, those who possess only insight and not tranquillity also. Ñāṇamoli (824) translates "bare-insight workers," which doesn't quite get the flavor. A sterile and desiccated intellectuality is what is meant, and Buddhaghosa clearly means this to have negative connotations. Such men, even though they are *arahants*, cannot attain the state of *saññā-vedayita-nirodha*. This is an important point and will be considered further.

For Buddhaghosa, then, insight into the nature of things is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the attainment of the *nirodha-samāpatti* (23.31). It is somewhat difficult to see why this should be so when it has already been clearly demonstrated that the *nirodha-samāpatti* is the complete cessation of all consciousness whatever. Buddhaghosa even goes on to precisely identify this state with *nibbāna* itself: "Why do they attain it? [i.e., the *nirodha-samāpatti*]. Becoming dissatisfied with the arising and dissolution of the formations they attain it, thinking: becoming without consciousness here and now (*diṭṭhe va dhamme acittakā hutvā*), reaching the cessation which is *nibbāna* (*nirodhaṃ nibbanaṃ patva*), we shall live in happiness" (23.30). We may usefully compare this precise identification of *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* with *nibbāna*—or at least with *nibbāna* in-life, that direct experience of the final state which is available to a man here and now/1/ — with a similar identification in Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN 4.454)./2/ Here too *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* is identified with *diṭṭhadhammanibbāna*, and here too it is combined with wisdom (*paññā*). This is an example of an attempt to relate and reconcile the necessity for intellectual insight with an idea of *nibbāna* which is clearly quite opposed to any such concept, centering as it does on an attempt to clear the mind of all intellectual content. We shall return to it.

So far then, we have looked briefly at what is meant by the development of concentration (*samādhi-bhāvanā*) as defined in the Pali canon and in the *Visuddhimagga*. We have seen that it is a narrowing of the range of awareness, a reduction in the content of consciousness, a progressive exclusion from the mind of both external and internal stimuli. We have also looked at what is said about the ultimate aim of such meditative practice; this is *saññā-vedayita-nirodha*, the complete cessation of all conscious awareness and of all reactions to external stimuli, a condition which Louis de La Vallée Poussin has called a "crise cataleptique" (1936–37:212), and Friedrich Heiler has referred to as "völlige

Apathie" (21). We have seen that this state is also explicitly identified with *nibbāna*. It is now necessary to look very briefly at the means used to attain this aim.

Concentrative meditation is usually expounded both in the Pali canon and the *Visuddhimagga* by means of reference to a hierarchically structured series of states of consciousness called the *jhānas*. This is the Pali form of the Sanskrit *dhyāna* (Chinese *Ch'an*; japanese *Zen*) and is usually translated simply as "meditation." However, in the Theravāda sources it has a somewhat more specialized meaning than the more general *bhāvanā*, which we are already translating as "meditation," and for that reason, as well as the fact that it is difficult to find an English equivalent which is not too clumsy to be used, I shall leave the term untranslated. Its semantic content should become clear from what follows. In the Pali sources (and in much of the surviving Sanskrit literature of the Indian Mahāyāna) there are a number of different classificatory systems used to describe what the *jhānas* are. There are sometimes said to be four, sometimes five, sometimes eight, and sometimes nine of them. I shall not attempt to describe or disentangle these different systems here; to do so would take a great deal of space and is not strictly relevant for our purposes./3/ I shall accept as standard the system of four *jhānas* of form (*rūpajhānas*), four formless *jhānas* (*arūpajhānas*), and one final attainment (*samāpatti*), which is *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* and is not strictly speaking a *jhāna* at all. This makes in all a ninefold series, often referred to as the nine attainments (*samāpatti*).

Much could be said about these states of consciousness; all that can be offered here is a very brief summary. The four *jhānas* of form are those states of consciousness which become progressively more empty of intellectual and emotional contents. To take an example: the first *rūpāvacarajhāna* is described as a psychological condition which has five factors: reasoning (*vitakka*), reflection (*vicāra*), joy (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*), one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). By the time the fourth *jhāna* of form has been attained, the only factors remaining are equanimity (*upekkha*) and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*); the rest have been removed from the mind by means of concentrative exercises. Moving on from there to the *arūpāvacarajhānas* the mind becomes still more empty, entering first the sphere of boundless space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*), then the sphere of boundless consciousness (*viññānañcāyatana*), then to the sphere of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*) and to the sphere of neither cognition or noncognition (*nevasaññāsaññāyatana*), ending finally in *saññā-vedayita-nirodha*, the ninth and final attainment, which is *nibbāna*-in-life./4/

The ninefold *jhāna*-structure, then, describes a series of states of consciousness of increasing abstraction. The mind is first emptied of all emotional content, then of all discursive thought and reaction to external stimuli, and finally of any content whatever. Buddhaghosa gives descriptions of the types of exercise which can be used to attain this end, showing in detail how the mind can be trained to ascend from its "normal" state of clutter and distractedness to the final states of complete emptiness, clarity, and passivity. In the final attainment, the

nirodha-samāpatti, the mind becomes like a perfectly clear pool of water; it reflects nothing back from the outside, has nothing within it to obstruct the rays of the sun, and is totally without movement. The techniques used to attain this end are too numerous and complex to be described in any detail here; the whole of the middle section of the *Visuddhimagga* (3–14) is devoted in one way or another to these techniques and their effects. There is space here to mention only one in outline, that which Buddhaghosa calls *kasiṇa* meditation (4.21ff). This consists of taking a specific material object—in the case of the earth *kasiṇa* a clay disc, in the case of the blue *kasiṇa* blue flowers, and so forth—and sitting about eight feet from it on a small chair (4.26). The meditator then concentrates on the meditation object until an eidetic image of it can be recalled at will whether or not the external object is present. Briefly, this is a means by which external stimuli can be interiorized, a psychotropic technique by means of which all mental activity can be brought to a single point and concentrated there—in the case of the earth *kasiṇa* upon a clay disc. Buddhaghosa says that this technique can take the meditator as far as the fourth *jhāna* of form only, and that to enter upon the formless *jhānas*, further and partially different techniques are necessary.

To summarize our findings thus far: It has been suggested that in the Theravādin presentation of *samādhi bhāvanā* we have a number of psychotropic techniques, the practice of which brings about a gradual ascent through a hierarchically structured series of states of consciousness. These states of consciousness are increasingly empty and abstract at the upper levels of the hierarchy, increasingly withdrawn from external stimuli and internal discursive thought, culminating finally in the cessation of all sensation, cognition, and intellection, a state of contentless consciousness which is for all practical purposes quite indistinguishable from death. This state is frequently presented in the texts, both canonical and commentarial, as the final soteriological goal of the practicing Buddhist./5/ That is, it is assimilated to, and sometimes precisely identified with, *nibbāna*.

There is unfortunately no space here to discuss in detail the kinds of psychophysiological change likely to be induced in the meditator by the practice of this type of concentrative technique. It may be tentatively suggested that EEG readings obtained from a meditator who had reached *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* would be characterized by high amplitude alpha waves which would not be susceptible to blocking by external stimuli. It seems possible, though, that the trance state referred to by the Pali phrase *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* might have still more in common with that of a long-term coma patient. But in the absence of further research, both empirical and theoretical, this must remain speculative./6/ The broad outlines of both the techniques and results of *samādhi bhāvanā* should now be clear, and this is sufficient for our purposes.

2. Insight meditation

The second of the two types of meditative practice is that aimed at developing insight into the nature of the universe as it really is—which means, in this context, as it is conceived by developed Buddhist doctrine. Fortunately, we need to devote rather less space to expounding this type of meditation than was the case for concentrative meditation. This is largely because *vipassanā bhāvanā*, insight meditation, is regarded by contemporary Theravādin orthodoxy as Buddhist meditation *par excellence*, the only kind which really counts and the only kind which leads to *nibbāna*. That this is not the whole picture we have already seen in what has been said about *samādhi-bhāvanā*, but the centrality of insight meditation to most modern expositions of Theravāda does mean that much less needs to be said about it. Descriptions are available in any modern introduction (e.g., Rahula, 1967; Nyāṇaponika).

We may take *vipassanā* (insight) and *paññā* (wisdom) as equivalent terms. They are used interchangeably in the texts in the kinds of context which concern us. Buddhaghosa once again defines for us with some precision exactly what wisdom is: "Wisdom has the characteristic (*lakkhaṇa*) of penetrating the defining essence of things (*dhammasabhāvapaṭivedha*); its function (*rasa*) is to abolish the darkness of delusion (*mohandhakāra-viddhaṇsana*) which obscures the defining essence of things; its manifestation (*paccupaṭṭhāna*) is absence of delusion (*asammoha*). Because of the words: 'One who is concentrated knows and sees things as they really are' (*samāhito yathābhūtaṃ jānāti passati*), concentration is its immediate cause (*padaṭṭhāna*)" (14.7). The key term in this definition is *yathābhūta* combined very frequently throughout the Pali literature with *ñāą* or *dassana*. Translated somewhat freely as "knowledge or vision in accordance with reality," this is the full and proper definition of *paññā*, wisdom, the desired aim of the man who practices insight meditation. Such a man can see the defining essence, the own-being (*sabhāva*) of everything, and his vision is no longer obscured by the threefold fault of passion (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). Buddhaghosa tells us that wisdom is manifested in the wise man as absence of delusion.

The aim of insight meditation, the development of wisdom, is, of course, enlightenment, but a rather different kind of enlightenment from that which we have discussed in our presentation of concentrative meditation. Here, in the context of insight meditation, *nibbāna* receives the usual schematic definition of being the destruction of *rāga, dosa*, and *moha*; the end of suffering; the absence of rebirth; the breaking of the chain of conditioned coproduction (*paticcasamuppāda*) which defines the whole of phenomenal existence; the unconditioned (*asaṇkhata*), unmade (*akata*), unborn (*ajāta*), deathless (*amata*) state of eternal bliss in which the enlightened man fully knows and understands the threefold characteristic (*tilakkhaṇa*) of all conditioned things—that they are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and without self. It is coolness, the blowing out of the flame of passion, the dispassionate awareness and understanding of the universe through

the categories of Buddhist philosophy, especially the four truths and the twelve-fold chain of conditioned coproduction. The aim of insight meditation is above all an awareness *that*, an awareness which has content. It perceives and understands things as existing in such-and-such a way, while at the same time being quite detached from such a perception. In terms of Pali grammar it is an awareness which can be contained within a *ti* clause, a discursive and intellectual understanding. That wisdom is discursive in this sense, and that its ultimate development in the state of *nibbāna* is also discursive, is shown in a multitude of ways in the Pali literature. One of Buddhaghosa's rarely quoted parables (Vism. 14.4–5) demonstrates it very well. He says that knowing (*jānana*) is present in cognition, intellection, and wisdom but that in cognition it is at a low level, in intellection at an intermediate level, and in wisdom at a high level. Cognition is like a child without discretion (*ajātabuddhidāraka*), who, on finding a heap of coins, sees only their external shape and configuration, not realizing that they are valuable as well as beautiful. Intellection is like a villager (*gāmikapurisa*) who knows also that the coins are reckoned valuable for human use and enjoyment. Wisdom is like a money-changer (*heraññika*) who knows all that the child and villager know but can also tell by looking at the coins, weighing, smelling, and tasting them, exactly which coins are counterfeit and which genuine, precisely where each of them was made, and by whom, and what the value of each is. It is this last kind of extensive and precise discursive awareness about things which is characterized as *paññā*, and which insight meditation is designed to develop to its highest degree.

To describe *paññā* awareness might be objected to on the grounds that it has too intellectual a connotation. I do not intend to suggest, however, that to possess *paññā* is merely a question of having some specific items of knowledge present to one's mind. On the contrary, there is an essential element of "seeing as" as well as "knowing that" in *paññā*. Not only does one know, for example, that the universe is composed of *dhammas*, instantaneous events which have no independent or enduring existence, but one actually perceives the universe in this way. The possessor of *paññā* is a man who has learned to dissolve the mentally-constructed solidities and continuities of the universe of normal perception, and to perceive in their place the causal flux described by Buddhist Abhidhamma philosophy. Thus the "seeing as" and "knowing that" components of *paññā* are vitally interrelated, and this is the meaning of the frequent use of the compound *yathābhūta-ñāṇa-dassana* in the Pali literature: not only does one know the way things are, but one directly perceives the known reality. Concept and reality become fused in the highest development of *paññā* which we are discussing here; the use of the term "discursive" is meant to stress that, although the element of vision is important, the element of knowing is never completely transcended in the *vipassanā*/*paññā* complex of ideas.

To summarize our conclusions thus far about the nature of *paññā*, the goal of insight meditation: We have suggested that wisdom is a type of dispassionate discursive knowledge and vision, that insight meditation (*vipassanā bhāvanā* is a

meditative technique designed to inculcate and develop it, and that the end of such development—*nibbāna*—is in this context conceived as a kind of continuous dispassionate cognitive/intellectual vision of the universe as a causally conditioned flux of point-instants in which there is no continuing principle of individuality. The means used to achieve this kind of conscious awareness is simply a continuous attempt to internalize the categories of Buddhist metaphysics and to make those categories coextensive with the way one perceives the world. The whole of the second half of the *Visuddhimagga* is devoted to this process, expounded by means of the seven purities. The very titles of the last five of these purities (Vism. 18–22) give an excellent overview of what it means to develop *paññā*. The first is the purification of view (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*), stressing the knowledge aspect of *paññā*; then comes purification by overcoming doubt (*kankhā-vitaraṇa-visuddhi*), followed by the purification of knowing and seeing what is the path and what is not *maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*), and the purification of knowledge and vision of the way (*paṭipadā-ñāṇadassana-v.*); the culmination is straightforward knowledge and vision (*ñāṇadassana-v.*), the defining characteristics of wisdom. One way of developing this knowledge and vision—among many—is to contemplate an object under the fundamental Buddhist category of impermanence. One might take a tree as the object of this meditation and think of it as growing from seed to maturity and then decaying again into rottenness and death. One might do the same with a man or a mountain. Alternatively, one might have to learn to contemplate things under the characteristic of their inherent unsatisfactoriness in order to combat undue attachment to the beauties of the universe; very similar is the well-known series of meditations on the loathsomeness of the body. At higher levels of competence one would have to learn to internalize the whole complex system of classification which goes to make up the Abhidhamma; this would involve not only the four truths, three factors, and twelvefold chain, but also the complex Abhidhammic psychology, which analyzes each mental event into its constituent factors and shows how it arises and passes away.

Perhaps the simplest and most effective way of developing *paññā* described in the Pali canon is that of *satipaṭṭhāna*, the practice of mindfulness. Essentially, this consists in paying continuous and precise attention (*manasikāra*) to each and every event, both internal and external, as it occurs. At first this is a non-judgmental awareness; typically it may begin with observation of in- and out-breathing, progress from there to observation of the movements of the body, the arising and passing away of thoughts, the forming of intentions, and so forth. The point of this meditative exercise is that it chops up mental and physical events into discrete and yet interrelated events; the whole of one's physical and mental universe dissolves into a fluid series of point-instants, each event becomes momentary, and the connecting solidarities provided by the concepts of individuality, permanence, and so on, very rapidly vanish. It is, as anyone who has tried it will testify, an extremely effective way of training the awareness to perceive the universe in accordance with the categories of the Abhidhamma, and may be taken as a paradigm example of how insight meditation operates./7/

To summarize what we have discovered about the meditative practices and soteriological aims included under the heading of insight meditation: *Vipassanā bhāvanā* is a series of techniques which involves paying attention to a particular phenomenon or series of phenomena using one or more of the categories of Buddhist metaphysics as a framework for understanding. Its aim is to open out the individual's awareness until he can learn to become fully and continuously aware of the universe as it really is. Such awareness appears to be a kind of detached, emotionless, intuitive vision of the nature of things as a flux of causally conditioned point-instants (Johansson, 1969), an awareness which has disposed of the interpretative concepts of selfhood, permanence, pleasure and pain, and yet an awareness which remains essentially discursive in that it can be verbalized. There is nothing ineffable about wisdom for a Theravādin (Gimello: 192–93). The aims and results of this kind of meditative practice are, therefore, radically opposed to those of *samādhi bhāvanā*, or concentrative meditation; there we had a series of increasingly abstract states of consciousness, culminating in the complete cessation of sensation, cognition, and intellection; here we have a progressive opening-out of the individual's awareness to include and comprehend the whole universe under the categories of transience, emptiness, and unsatisfactoriness. Sensation, cognition, and intellection are not brought to a halt as in the final stage of concentrative meditation, but instead are developed and, as it were, "*paññised*"—imbued with wisdom. The methods and aims of each kind of practice—both equally prominent in the texts—are radically at odds, and it is difficult to see how they can be reconciled. Therein lies the problem.

3. The relationship between concentration and insight

The Theravāda tradition is itself aware of this problem, and makes its own attempts at reconciling the two types of meditative practice and the two soteriological goals. These attempts are not always mutually consistent, and the tradition does not appear to be certain whether and to what extent both types of meditation are necessary for the attainment of *nibbāna*. We have already seen that Buddhaghosa regards the practice of insight meditation and the concomitant attainment of wisdom as a necessary but not sufficient condition for the attainment of *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* (607). Regarded from the other angle, we have seen that he regards concentration as the occasion or immediate cause (*padaṭṭhāna*) of wisdom, and that he quotes with approval the frequently repeated canonical statement: "One who is concentrated knows and sees things as they really are" (e.g., AN 5.3). These statements are not quite as strong as those which suggested that one could not reach *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* without some admixture of insight in one's practice; they seem only to suggest that concentration (through to what degree is not specified) would be a considerable help in the practice of insight meditation.

If we look elsewhere in the canon we find statements that say wisdom can be

attained quite without the help of the *jhānas*, much less of their culmination, the attainment of cessation. For example, in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta*, in both its DN and MN forms, we find the clear implication that *nibbāna* can be attained by the practice of mindfulness alone without the concentration games involved in *samādhi-bhāvanā*. *Saññā-vedayita-nirodha* is not attained by mindfulness because it simply does not fit into such a context; the soteriological goal of *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* is not coherent with the methods and aims of *satipaṭṭhāna*. Similarly, many of the standard descriptions in the canon of the meditative path leading to enlightenment mention only the four *jhānas* of form (*rūpajhānas*), and then only as a kind of limbering-up exercise for the mind, a way of making it supple and preparing it for the effort needed to gain insight into the real nature of the universe in the way that has been described in our section on insight meditation. In contexts of this type the more developed concentration exercises are either bypassed altogether or used only as a kind of preliminary in the service of the wider goal of insight. They are not used as a means to gain the attainment of cessation because, as we have suggested, this soteriological goal is inappropriate in the context of insight meditation. It is in this context that the many references to the *jhānas* as preparatory and purificatory should be placed. Concentration here only rids the mind of defilements. It does not itself have soteriological effects. /8/

The converse, however, is not true. So far as I am aware, in contexts where *samādhi-bhāvanā* dominates and the soteriological goal aimed at is that of *saññā-vedayita-nirodha*, we rarely find *paññā* bypassed altogether as we have seen *samādhi* on occasion to be. It is usually, as it were, injected at the last moment, and *nibbāna* is reached by a final burst of wisdom, sitting somewhat uneasily in a context where the subject under discussion is the progressive bringing to a halt of all conscious processes whatever. For example, in AN 4.454, at the conclusion of a section dealing with the ascent through the eight *jhānas* (*rūpa* and *arūpa*) culminating in the attainment of *saññā-vedayita-nirodha*, we find the following formula: "Once again, a monk going quite beyond the sphere of neither-cognition-nor-non-cognition (eighth *arūpajhāna*), enters and remains in the cessation of cognition and sensation (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*). Understanding (*paññāya*) and seeing (*disvā*), his impurities are destroyed (*āsavā parikkhinā honti*)" (AN 4.454). Another formula, also used frequently to describe the attainment of liberating insight concurrently with the realization of *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* is: *paññāya ca me disvā āsavā parikkhayaṃ agamaṃsu* (e.g., AN 4.438–48). This last-minute injection of wisdom and the vocabulary of insight meditation is, to say the least of it, surprising. It is not explained in the texts how *paññā*—which we have already determined to be a discursive and conscious awareness of the reality of things—can possibly enter into a psychological state where discursive awareness is by definition ruled out. We have here, I think, one of the more uneasy results of the Buddhist scholastic mania for neat classifications. The thinking may have gone something like this: wisdom, intuitive insight into the nature of things, is the *sine qua non* of Buddhist

enlightenment, at least in terms of the Abhidhamma, and so even in contexts where it seems most unlikely that enlightenment was originally conceived in any such terms, wisdom must be injected. The result is an unsatisfactory combination of two radically different kinds of soteriology.

There are other canonical texts in which the conflict between the two types of meditative practice comes to the fore. The *locus classicus* for this is undoubtedly the debate between Musīla and Nārada (SN 2.115ff; cf. Poussin, 1936–37). Musīla is the representative of wisdom; he has penetrated to the essential nature of things. Nārada is the representative of concentration, the practitioner of yoga and ascesis. Similarly, in AN 3.355 we hear of an acrimonious debate between monks zealous for *dhamma* (*dhamma-yogā-bhikkhū*) and meditators (*jhāyin*). The answer given in this section of the AN is that both ways are valuable. Those who practice concentrative meditation—the *jhāyins*—are "those who live having touched the deathless sphere with the body."/9/ Those zealous for *dhamma* are "those who, penetrating by means of wisdom, see the profound goal." Although the value of both ways is stressed, there is no attempt to explain just how the two are to be related when, as we have seen, the meditative techniques and soteriological goals on each side are so very different and even conflicting. /10/

One more oddity needs to be mentioned in the canonical and commentarial attempts to reconcile and combine concentrative meditation and insight meditation. If we look at Buddhaghosa's list of the benefits of getting wisdom (*paññā*), we find four such mentioned (23.1ff). The first is the removal of various defilements (*nānākilesaviddhaṇsana*); the second is the partaking of the experience of the noble fruit (*ariyaphalarasānubhavana*); both of these are standard and their exegesis will not be entered into here. But the third benefit of attaining *paññā* is *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* (23.16). This is very odd indeed, and as far as I can see Buddhaghosa's explanations do not give any satisfactory account of how it is that the cessation of cognition and sensation can plausibly be said to be a *benefit* of the attainment of insight. All our investigations thus far have pointed to the conclusion that the *nibbāna* realized by insight meditation is simply not the same as the *nibbāna*-in-life (*diṭṭhadhammanibbāna*) which is the result of concentrative meditation, and so it is very difficult to see why Buddhaghosa should wish to make this latter soteriological goal a benefit of insightful understanding. It should be remembered also that this mention of *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* as a benefit of wisdom occurs in the final chapter of the *Visuddhimagga*, at the very climax of the whole vast work. This fact alone should give us pause and make us reevaluate the place given to concentrative meditation and its concomitant psychological states in expositions of Buddhist meditation theory. Finally, we should note that Buddhaghosa follows his mention of the cessation of sensation and cognition with an almost bathetic statement that the achievement of worthiness to receive gifts is the fourth and final benefit of *paññā*. The *Visuddhimagga* does not end on a note of profound spiritual inspiration. Unfortunately, the many problems inherent in assessing the ambiguities inherent in the *Visuddhimagga*'s systems of classification, especially in this case, cannot be further discussed

here. The problem has now been adequately delineated and suggestions need to be made about its possible causes.

Before turning to this task, however, we need to look at modern Theravādin orthodoxy on these matters; we should ask what line is taken by modern interpreters of the tradition and whether they have anything to say to the problems we have been discussing. It seems in fact that much the same line is followed by all notable contemporary expositors of the tradition. Both Walpola Rahula (1967:68) and Nyāṇaponika Thera (102ff) say explicitly that the practices of concentrative meditation are not strictly necessary for the attainment of insight, though they may in certain cases be useful. Paravahera Vajirañāṇa Mahāthera, in his exposition of the *Visuddhimagga*, reflects the confusion of his sources when he implicitly contradicts himself, saying at one point that *samādhi-bhāvanā* is a necessary condition for attaining *nibbāna*, and denying this in another place (18, 343). The main point made by all commentators is that concentration exercises are only valuable in so far as they aid the attainment of insight; they are not given significance for their own sake, and the kind of *nibbāna* that most modern Theravāda practitioners seem to be interested in is that which we have discussed in our section on insight meditation. The attainment of cessation is rarely mentioned, and, even when it is, usually with no recognition of its function and value in the canonical and commentarial literature. The kinds of practice espoused and taught by modern. Theravādins, both in the West and in South Asia, also show this devaluation of the canonical *samādhi* exercises. *Satipaṭṭhāna*, as a paradigm example of insight meditation, forms the center of meditative practice in modern Theravāda, and it is difficult, in either America or Europe, to find Theravādins able and willing to give instruction in the finer points of *kasiṇa* meditation or to expound the value of the *nirodha-samāpatti*./11/

We may draw the following conclusions from the material surveyed in the course of this paper:

1. There are presented in the canonical and commentarial texts of Theravāda Buddhism two radically different types of meditative practice which have different psychological effects and issue in different soteriological goals.

2. The texts themselves are aware of this tension and make a number of attempts to resolve it. The classificatory systems which result from these attempts are intellectually unsatisfactory and cannot form the basis for proper meditative practice, as witness the split in modern Theravāda between the proponents and practitioners of concentrative meditation and those who expound and practice insight meditation.

3. Modern Theravādin orthodoxy, which takes the line that concentration is only valuable insofar as it acts as an adjunct to the development of insight and has preliminary purificatory effects, and also plays down the significance of the *arūpa-jhānas* and the *nirodha-samāpatti*, does not satisfactorily resolve the ambiguities and tensions we have uncovered.

4. This whole problem has extremely wide-ranging implications; it affects

how we are to think of *nibbāna*, the ultimate soteriological goal of Buddhism. Are we to see it as a psychological state in which discursive thought is not only possible but required, the result of a radical interiorization of Buddhist metaphysical categories, or are we to see it as the blissful cessation of all consciousness whatever, the ending of all pain? Soteriological methods govern soteriological goals; if you practice concentrative meditation you will end up in a different "place" from that reached by practicing insight meditation. So this problem also has important practical implications in determining the choice of meditative techniques for the individual practitioner.

Ideally this paper should end with a resolution of the whole issue. I shall not attempt one because it does not seem possible, given the present limited state of our knowledge about the psycho-physiological effects of different meditation techniques, together with our still restricted understanding of the categories of the Abhidhamma. The conclusion must be that the tension between the methods and aims of concentrative meditation and those of insight meditation runs very deep in the Theravāda texts and is mirrored there by another radical tension—that between ignorance (*avijjā*) and desire (*taṇhā*). In the standard formulation of the four truths, the root cause of all suffering is said to be *taṇhā*)—craving or lust, literally "thirst." In the standard formulation of the *paticca-samuppāda* the root cause of the chain of becoming is said to be *avijjā*—ignorance. Clearly, if ignorance is regarded as the root of all evil for the Buddhist, then he should take steps to remedy this condition by gaining insightful knowledge. There is no better way of doing so than the practice of insight meditation, which, as we have seen, results in just such a clarity of knowledge about the universe as would be required to dispose of *avijjā*. If, on the other hand, craving and desire are regarded as the root causes of suffering, then the Buddhist should at once take steps to rid his mind of all desire. Once again, there is no better way of doing this than the practice of concentrative meditation, which, as we have seen, rids the mind first of all emotional content and then of all intellectual content, culminating finally in the supreme desirelessness of the deathless realm, the *nibbāna*-in-life which is the complete cessation of cognition and sensation.

This connection between *taṇhā* and *samādhi* on the one hand and *avijjā* and *vipassanā* on the other is to be found also in the canonical texts. In AN 1.61 we read: "What is the result, O monks, of the development of tranquillity [*samatha*, here equivalent to *samādhi*]? The mind is developed. What is the result of a developed mind? Passion is abandoned [*rāga*, here equivalent to *taṇhā*]. What is the result, O monks, of the development of insight [*vipassanā*]? Wisdom [*paññā*] is developed. What is the result of the development of wisdom? Ignorance [*avijjā*] is abandoned" (AN 1.61). This tension between the desire/concentration complex of thought on the one hand, and the ignorance/insight complex on the other, goes to the very heart of Theravāda Buddhism. On how we resolve it hangs our entire understanding of Buddhist soteriological theory and practice. Perhaps still more important for those concerned to make the practice of Buddhist meditation a real existential possibility is the fact that on the resolution of

this fundamental tension depends how Buddhism as a system of spiritual practice is to be communicated. There is here, therefore, not merely a historical issue but also a pressing existential and hermeneutical one.

Notes

I would like to thank Professor Richard Gombrich of the University of Oxford and Dr. Steve Collins of the University of Bristol for their freely given time and expertise in discussing these issues with me.

1 *Diṭṭhadhammanibbāna* or *saupādisesanibbāna*. The necessary distinctions are discussed in detail in Vism. 16.67ff.
2 *Bhikkhu sabbaso nevasaññānāsaññāyatānaṃ samatikamma saññavedayitanirodhaṃ upasampajja viharati, paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti. Ettāvatāpi kho . . . diṭṭhadhammanibbanaṃ vuttam Bhagavatā nippariyāyena*. AN 4.454.
3 See DN 1.74–77 for the fourfold classification. See DN 1.183–84, 2.112; MN 1.41, 1.159–60; *Vibhanga* 183–84, 245, for the fivefold classification. See SN 2.222 for the complete ninefold hierarchy. Much has been omitted here; no mention has been made of the *vimokkhas* (DN 3.262), or the *abhibhāyatanas* (DN 2.110, 3.260). Nothing has been said as to the attainment of supernormal powers (*iddhi*) as a result of practicing *samādhi bhāvanā*, nor of Buddhaghosa's distinction between *upacāra* (access) and *appaṇā* (absorption). The presentation given here is schematic in the extreme, though I hope that nothing of importance for the purposes of this paper has been omitted. Fuller details may be found in the relevant sections of Vajirañāṇa and Barnes.
4 It should be noted that Buddhaghosa seems to envisage a distinction between *upacāra* and *appaṇā* for each of the eight *jhānas*. There are problems in determining exactly what he means, but it seems safe to say that the access/absorption distinction is not intended to apply to *saññā-vedayita-nirodha*.
5 It should be pointed out here that frequent statements may be found in both canon and commentary to the effect that all *jhānic* states are also instinct with impermanence and unsatisfactoriness, and therefore not of final importance for salvation. We shall also see, when we come to consider the canonical and commentarial attempts at connecting the two types of meditation—*samādhi* and *vipassanā*—that there is almost always a last-minute injection of *vipassanā* in order to enable the *nirodhasamāpatti* to be reached. Such statements certainly indicate that canonical and commentarial orthodoxy regards *vipassanā* as the *sine qua non* of Buddhist enlightenment, but they provide no reasoned answer to the problem under consideration in this paper. This issue will be further discussed in the third section of this paper.
6 An excellent review of the current state of research into the psycho-physiological effects of meditative practice may be found in Walsh. It is clear that much remains to be done, though some suggestive discoveries have been made. Anand Chinna and Singh discovered that yogis in *samādhi*—using techniques essentially similar to those discussed here under the heading of concentrative meditation—showed high amplitude alpha waves on their EEG recordings, and that such waves could not be blocked by external stimuli. That is, the meditators' brain states were simply not altered by what was going on around them. In contrast, Kasamatsu and Hirai discovered that while Zen meditators produce a similar EEG reading to that of *samādhi* practitioners, their alpha rhythms were susceptible to blocking by external stimuli, although this blocking was not reduced by the usual habituation mechanism. That is, if a person in a "normal" state of consciousness is seated in a quiet room and a rhythmic series of loud clicks is played over a sound system to him, then his EEG records marked blocking of alpha rhythms at first, but, as he gets used to the clicks, the blocking is reduced and eventu-

ally almost disappears. He has become habituated to the stimulus. In the case of the Zen meditator this does not happen and the alpha blocking remains at a constant level. Unlike either the practitioner of *samādhi* or the person in "normal" consciousness, the Zen meditator is receptive to external stimuli, but does not become habituated to them. It is clear that the concentrative meditation we are concerned with here is much closer to the yogic *samādhi* than to the Zen state, and there are at least some indications that Zen meditation has fundamental similarities to *vipassanā bhāvanā*. The whole topic needs more work from both the buddhological and psychological angles.

7 Buddhaghosa considers *satipaṭṭhāna* in that section of the *Visuddhimagga* where he deals with *samādhi bhāvanā*. This is one more of those classification problems which are considered in the third section of this paper. It is clear enough for our purposes that *satipaṭṭhāna* results in the kind of psychological state which we are here characterizing as the aim of insight meditation.

8 E.g., SN 4.79: *samāhite citte dhammā pātubhavanti*. Concentration cleans the mirror of the mind and things can then appear as they really are.

9 *Amataṃ dhātum*—clearly *nibbāna*. One more piece of evidence, if any were needed, that *samādhi-bhāvanā* can lead to *nibbāna* and that the *nirodha samāpatti* is assimilated to that state.

10 Cf. also AN 6.46, 1.61, DN 3.105. This last is especially interesting for its introduction of the category *ubhata-bhāga-vimutto*, "the man who has been liberated both ways," that is, by both wisdom and concentration. DN 3.105 mentions only *ubhata-bhāga-vimutto* and *paññā-vimutto*; the possibility of *samādhi-vimutto* does not seem to be envisaged.

11 It should be said that concentrative meditation has not been entirely abandoned in Theravāda countries, although it seems to have greatly declined since the rise of the so-called "Burmese *satipaṭṭhāna* method" in the nineteenth century. There appears to be, as one might expect, a fairly radical split between those monasteries and meditation centers where *samādhi bhāvanā* is practiced and those where *vipassanā bhāvanā* holds the stage. Recent accounts may be found in Hamilton-Merritt and Kornfield.

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26

COUNCILS AS IDEAS AND EVENTS IN THE THERAVĀDA

*Charles Hallisey**

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> Before giving a short survey of the traditions relative to the Buddhist Councils, it seems advisable to state what these councils were.
>
> Louis de la Vallée Pousin[1]

It is a standard scholarly practice to begin a presentation of research with a definition, in the strict sense of the word, of the subject which has been investigated. We are encouraged to do this early in our education, with reminders to 'define your terms', and we generally admire the clarity that a good definition can bring to an argument. We value definitions, even 'working definitions', in the presentation of research so routinely that we rarely consider the implications of this practice for research itself. All of us know by hard experience that the actual processes of research are far messier than is suggested by the way we present our research. Even so, we assume certain parallels. Our research begins with a choice of a subject that seems to function like the initial definition in a research presentation. But while we may begin with an attempt to define a subject, as a practical way of limiting and focusing our research, in the course of investigation we often discover a state of affairs quite different from what we had anticipated. This common turn of events can dismay or discourage, but it can also delight. 'A new discovery' — major, of course — is the stuff scholarly dreams are made of.

It would be one thing if the first definition, taken as the starting point for research, were wrong, out and out wrong, and thus could be replaced by the new understanding. This is actually quite rare, however, in large part because we usually adapt these first working definitions from other sources. As Bernard Cohn has said, "each piece of research doesn't start as if it were year one, nor does the scholar begin as a *tabula rasa* to be instructed by the native or the document, nor is he or she merely a pencil which records in some fashion what is read or seen."[2] In fact, what we choose to study is probably set more by the units of study or theoretical assumptions in our particular field of training than by the

subject matter itself. The seemingly better understanding of a topic ends up being merely another interpretation yielded by a different theoretical perspective. One understanding does not negate another, nor do we see ways that they might be related in a common schema. Different understandings are allowed simply to co-exist, in mutual isolation, while we argue back and forth.

For a community of scholars this is disastrous. Our research presentations end up bearing witness to our lives in an academic Tower of Babel.

It is easy to see how this occurred. As students of Buddhism, we may welcome new approaches to the rich resources of the Buddhist traditions.[3] There is more than enough work to do, and labourers are still few. Perhaps the chronological and spatial extent of the Buddhist traditions made the introduction of some new approaches relatively unproblematic at first. For example, anthropologists and sociologists, seeking to understand the workings of culture and society, were naturally drawn to the study of contemporary Buddhist communities, fields of research which textualists and historians generally preferred to ignore.

This division of labour appears neater than it actually is. It looks as if it is a division of subject matter, with historian and anthropologist each examining what he or she is best prepared to study. But it sometimes masks a more profound difference in theoretical perspective. This difference becomes an obstacle when both anthropologists and historians have their own definite ideas about a common subject. Such is the case with the councils (*saṅgīti* or *saṅgāyanā*) in the Theravāda.

The purpose of this paper is propaedeutic. That is, I wish to follow La Vallée Poussin's advice, given in the quotation at the start of this paper, and sketch out what the councils were in the Theravāda; this sketch is a preliminary to the survey of the councils I am working on. My purpose is to define the subject by showing how different scholarly understandings of councils may be combined to interpret their place in the Theravāda as a historical tradition. Moreover, in sketching out what the councils were, I hope to indicate how they might be fruitfully studied. These programmatic comments, I think, will have applicability to other areas in the study of Buddhism.

Charles Prebish evocatively referred to the first Buddhist Councils as problems which have "haunted western Buddhological research through almost all of its last one hundred years".[4] Even though these first Buddhist councils might seem to be a natural starting point for any investigation of the Theravādin councils, to begin with them is actually to become embroiled in a complicated and ongoing debate.[5] Much of this debate, especially on the historical value of different accounts about these councils, seems one-sided when viewed from the vantage point of later Theravādin cultural history. To begin from the later Theravādin councils is equally problematic though, since these events conventionally draw their sanction from accounts of the earlier councils.

Our difficulty is an academic chicken and egg problem: in order to understand the individual councils, the parts, we need to have some idea of the councils as a whole, but we generally only know the whole through the individual parts. Some

way out of this hermeneutical circle, in this particular instance, can be found by looking at a similar case, the role of the Pāli canon in the Theravāda.

In recent years, two different orientations to the Pāli canon have emerged in the scholarly literature concerned with contemporary Theravādin communities.[6] Both are reactions against the interpretive prominence the canon has had in Buddhist studies. One orientation emphasizes the actual possession and use of texts. Charles Keyes, for example, has argued that

> "the relevance of texts to religious dogma in the worldview of any people cannot be assumed simply because some set of texts has been recognized as belonging to a particular religious tradition. It is necessary, in every particular case, to identify those texts that can be shown to be the sources of dogmatic formulations that are being communicated to the people through some medium. There is no single integrated textual tradition based on a 'canon' to the exclusion of all other texts . . .
>
> The very size and complexity of a canon leads those who use it to give differential emphasis to its component texts. Moreover, even those for whom a defined set of scriptures exists will employ as sources of religious ideas many texts which do not belong to a canon . . . [Finally,] for any particular temple-monastery in Thailand or Laos, the collection of texts available to the people in the associated community is not exactly the same as those found in another temple-monastery. In brief, the relevance of textual formulations to religious dogma in popular worldviews is problematic in each specific case."[7]

The orientation that emerges from this discussion is primarily concerned with issues of transmission and distribution: 'who had what texts when?'

A second orientation emphasizes the *idea* of the canon. François Bizot, for example, has pointed out with respect to modern Khmer Buddhism that the term *tipiṭaka* "refers less to a collection of texts than to an ideological concept".[8] This orientation is concerned more with the internal constitution of the tradition: 'what makes the Theravāda valid from the point of view of Theravādins?'.

The two orientations highlight different facts. The first highlights the presence within the Theravāda of standpoints which are geographically and historically very particular. This particularity, however, may be obscured for Buddhist individuals and groups by the phenomenon highlighted by the second orientation, a perspective which is considerably loftier and less determinately located.

These two orientations, taken together, can and should replace an assumption that was once more widely held than it is today, although it still has a pernicious influence in scholarship. That is, it was once widely assumed that the Pāli canon — or the 'early Buddhism' which was reconstructed from the canon — constituted the Theravāda in all its essentials. With this assumption, almost all interesting questions about the Theravāda as a historical tradition remained unasked. The two, more recent orientations are clearly an improvement on that assumption, and

although they were developed in connection with the study of contemporary Buddhism, they are still very useful as tools for historical investigations.

In shorthand, I will call the first orientation's focus 'event' and the focus of the second orientation 'idea'.[9] By calling the first 'event', I wish to stress how a particular set of circumstances is largely accidental and thus unique. A scholar employing this orientation as an interpretive tool will discover how this set of circumstances came about and the impact that it subsequently had. When these multiple sets of circumstances collectively change to a substantial degree, then one may speak of a transition or transformation in the tradition.[10] By 'idea', I mean to emphasize persisting patterns of meanings and norms which mark the Theravāda; this notion could equally well be called 'structure'. These patterns can sanction or even shape the actions of individuals and groups.

The notion of *event* is more conventionally historical in its emphases, while the notion of *idea* is more typical of anthropology. Each can be used as a heuristic tool independent of the other, according to the research purposes of the scholar, but the phenomena they refer to are inevitably interrelated. The reason for the transmission of manuscripts of the *tipiṭaka* cannot be separated from the idea of the canon. And if we are aware that the texts of the canon are variously interpreted in different circumstances, as Keyes argues, at the same time we need to remember that the idea of the canon provides a framework which gives relative meaning and significance to the reading or hearing of other texts, or the performance of rituals.

I am not advocating that we should have recourse to ever-ready ahistorical frameworks of meaning here. We need to discover frameworks of significance, like the idea of the canon, within particular historical contexts; we should probably expect to find that persons may employ more than one framework within any given context. But when we are able to identify such frameworks *in situ*, we will then be able to see the constructedness of the Theravāda tradition. To put it another way, when we discern 'events' being given meaning by 'ideas' and 'ideas' being shaped by 'events' in particular contexts, we will be able to see the Theravāda as a tradition whose identity is continually being constituted and reconstituted, with its history and account of continuity in difference.

These general lessons — a distinction between event and idea, and the correlation of these two notions — can be applied specifically to the Theravādin *saṅgītis*. While the first lesson is already a major, if implicit, part of the scholarly literature on the Theravādin councils, the second still needs to be learned.[11]

Buddhological investigation of the first three councils at Rājagaha, Vesālī, and Pāṭaliputta has generally been part of a larger scholarly project to shed light on the Buddhist past "as it really was", to use von Ranke's phrase, with the result that the councils were defined, almost *a priori*, as events. While the goal of recovering the past "as it really was" remains unrealized — if indeed such an aim is even possible — comparative research on the various accounts of the First Councils found in Buddhist literature did succeed in making it impossible to attribute historical accuracy to any single description preserved by a particular Buddhist tradition. In short, one of the accomplishments of a century of research

on the First Councils has been to drive a wedge between our perception of the councils as historical events and Buddhist ideas about the councils.

Scholarly reaction to this distinction between councils as ideas and councils as events gradually evolved. An initial and understandable reaction was to see the distinction as offering a clear and sharp choice: the accounts either contain real history or they are fiction. Commenting on the account of the councils in the *Vinaya*, Oldenberg wrote, "what we have here before us is not history, but pure invention".[12] A tendency to see the accounts as essentially fictions was perhaps strengthened by the development of questions about the motives which could have led to the composition of the council narratives. Przyluski, for example, argued that "one (could) explain the diversity of the accounts of the (first) council (by saying that) there are so many different recitations *[saṅgīti]* as there are sects having a distinct canon. Each school tries to prove that its canon dates back to the origins of the Church and that it was codified by the assembly of Rājagṛha".[13]

Przyluski's comment illustrates the possibility of discussing Buddhist ideas about the councils independently of any judgement about the historical incidents themselves. He displays a significance in the ideas that is worth pursuing on their own terms even if the accounts are not reports of 'real' occurrences.

In a similar way, scholars have formulated questions about the events which can be pursued in isolation from Buddhist ideas about the councils. La Vallée Poussin intimated this possibility in his entry on Buddhist councils in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*: "While it is impossible to accept the Buddhist opinion, which views them as ecumenical assemblies after the Nicene type, it is at the same time necessary to explain how Buddhist monastic life, without the help of such solemn assemblies, nevertheless resulted in a sort of 'catholicism', and secured the redaction and the compilation of Canons of scripture very like one another."[14] La Vallée Poussin's position was that "while acknowledging the possibility (even the probability) of synods, we are at no loss to point out more certain and farther reaching causes of the facts to be explained, viz. the formation of the body of the Scriptures, the general (if not strict) 'consensus' of the sects of the Hīnayāna as concerns Buddha's teaching, and conversely, the splitting of the Order into sects."[15]

More recently, in an earlier series of the Buddhist Forum, Richard Gombrich illustrated another way that the First Councils might be discussed as events independent of the Buddhist accounts, although he offers a more positive evaluation of those accounts than La Vallée Poussin allowed. The discussion quoted here takes up the same question as La Vallée Poussin: how did the teachings of the Buddha, given over a long period of time in many places, come to be collected into what eventually became the Pāli Canon?

> "The *Saṅgīti-suttanta* begins by recounting that at the death of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta his followers disagreed about what he had said. The same passage occurs at two other points in the Pāli canon; but it makes good sense in this context, for it is the occasion for rehearsing a long summary

of the Buddha's teaching in the form of mnemonic lists. The text says that the rehearsal was led by Sāriputta, in the Buddha's lifetime. Whether the text records a historical incident we shall probably never know. But that is not my point. I would argue that unless we posit that such episodes took place not merely after the Buddha's death but as soon as Saṅgha had reached a size and geographic spread which precluded frequent meetings with the Buddha, it is not possible to conceive how the teachings were preserved or texts were composed. By similar reasoning, something like the first *saṅgāyanā* (communal recitation) must have taken place, otherwise there would simply be no corpus of scriptures. Details such as the precise time and place of the event are irrelevant to this consideration."[16]

The historical reasoning in this discussion is noteworthy. I would especially like to draw attention to Gombrich's use of the historian's knowledge of the outcome of the past to provide an alternative perspective with which to view and reconstruct the processes of early Buddhist history. His reasoning restores some balance to the scholar's choice of seeing the first Buddhist councils as either events or as ideas, as fact or fiction. It is understandable that since there is no archaeological or epigraphical evidence actually from the First Council, its historicity could appear quite suspect in the light of the all-too-obvious, vested interests expressed in the various council narratives. Gombrich's reasoning makes us seriously consider the historicity of an event like the First Council as a necessity.[17]

Is what we learn from this argument, however, transferable to later events which are also compared to or described as councils? This question would apply not only to the Second and Third Councils, but also to the events sponsored by Theravādins in the medieval and late periods. Gombrich seems to suggest such a possibility when he says without qualification in another context "the Councils (*saṅgāyanā*), better termed Communal Recitations, served the function of systematizing knowledge and perhaps of organizing its further preservation".[18] Similarly, K.R. Norman seems to project a pattern from the First Council on to the events of the medieval Theravāda:

> "It is not inappropriate to talk of a Burmese or Siamese or Sinhalese tradition for the transmission of a particular text, and the differences which we find between the readings of the manuscripts belonging to the various traditions must go back to the councils which have been held from time to time in the different countries. (T)he value of each tradition (stemming from different councils) will depend upon the care with which evidence for variant readings was sifted, and the criteria which were adopted as the basis of the decisions which were made."[19]

A projection of patterns reconstructed from events, however, is misleading. The *Mahāvaṃsa*, the great chronicle of Sri Lanka, records at least twelve coun-

cils in medieval Sri Lanka, and it is notable that a communal recitation or recension of the *tipiṭaka* is not mentioned as being part of any.[20] In fact, I am not aware of any definite evidence dating from the medieval period itself which indicates that "communal recitations" were held, although events which did occur still claimed the Third Council as a precedent.[21]

Thus, as much as I admire Gombrich's historical reasoning in connection with the events of the First Council, I also think we should keep in mind that it is applied to a specific body of evidence, in connection with a particular problem in reconstructing the Buddhist past. How much this reconstruction can serve as a guide to other events is a more difficult issue. On the one hand, the historical problems which confront a student of the Theravāda, whatever the period, are not quite the same as those facing the students of early Buddhism, even when both may be concerned with similar issues. This difference is, in part, due to the increasing complexity of the tradition itself; for example, the student of the Theravāda, aware of the *bhāṇaka* system and the use of writing, must acknowledge that "communal recitations" were not strictly necessary for the preservation of the Pāli canon.[22] On the other hand, simply projecting a pattern reconstructed from one event on to other events avoids asking how Theravāda Buddhists themselves transformed unique events into ideas of general meaningfulness.

The Theravāda's transformation of councils from events into ideas has been brilliantly investigated by Heinz Bechert in two articles which may be read together profitably.[23] Bechert's main purpose in the first article is to add to our knowledge of the Third Council as a historical event, but as part of a secondary argument, he traces how the events of that council were subsequently transformed in the Pāli commentaries and chronicles. In a manner reminiscent of Pryzluski's explanation of the diversity in the accounts of the First Council, Bechert argues that the events at Pāṭaliputra were actually a 'synod' of a monastic sub-group (*nikāya*), which later and for obvious reasons were portrayed as a unification and purification of the entire Saṅgha. In a second article on *sāsana* reform, Bechert discusses how these ideas about Asoka and the Third Council were used in the medieval Theravāda, arguing that the transformation of the historical Asoka into a Theravādin sectarian in the chronicles and commentaries provided a "foundation for ideology of state-Saṅgha relations in Theravāda countries".[24]

Keeping Bechert's insights, I would turn his statement around and say that Theravādins preferred to convert unique events into phenomena of general meaning and import by historicist transformations.[25] The presence of historical consciousness in the Theravāda tradition has frequently been noted, but its full significance in the development of the tradition still remains obscure.[26] Even so, there is ample evidence that one of the uses of history in the Theravāda tradition was to give individual events a general significance with ideas that have the appearance of being reports about previous events.

On the functioning of a previous event as an idea which can sanction other events, David Lowenthal has written that "the past validates present attitudes

and actions by affirming their resemblance to former ones. Previous usage seals with approval what is now done". At the same time, "precedent legitimates action on the assumption, explicit or implicit, that what has been should continue to be or be again".[27]

The use of the past to provide a general order of meaning is common in Theravādin literature and inscriptions. We see this use of the past, for example, in connection with Parākkamabāhu I's reform of the Saṅgha in twelfth-century Sri Lanka, as when the *Mahāvaṃsa* explicitly compares that king to Asoka in its detailed description of that council.[28] The historicist transformation of the event of the Third Council into an idea is even more prominent in Parākkamabāhu's Galvihara inscription which explains his motives for purifying the monastic order of his day:

> "Now, His Majesty reasoned thus: 'Seeing over and over again a blot such as this on the immaculate Buddhist religion, if a mighty emperor like myself were to remain indifferent, the Buddhist religion would perish, and many living beings will be destined to the *apāya*. Let me serve the Buddhist religion which should last five thousand years.' . . .
> (His Majesty pondered that in days gone by) the great king Dharma Aśoka, enlisting the services of Moggaliputta Tissa, the Great Elder of the Buddha Cycle acknowledged by the Buddha himself, crushed out the sinful *bhikkhus*; suppressed the heretics; purged the religion of its impurities and brought about the holding of the Third Rehearsal of the *Dhamma*. In like manner, His Majesty [Parākkamabāhu] also enlisted the services of those (*Udumbara-giri*) *bhikkhus* and, removing from the Master's religion many hundreds of sinful monks, brought about a *rapprochement* of the three fraternities and a coalition of them into one single fraternity (*nikāya*) – a reconciliation which former kings, despite their great efforts, were not able to effect, even though there were at the time eminently holy personages endowed with aggregates of diverse faculties such as the six psychic powers, etc."[29]

In this inscription, Asoka and the Third Council are claimed both as precedent and model for Parākkamabāhu's own efforts to unify and reform the monastic order. The precedent is not an exact blueprint for the proceedings, however, since there is no mention of a recitation of the canon as part of Parākkamabāhu's reform, even though the inscription does refer to the Third *dhammasaṅgīti*. Perhaps the more literal meaning of the term *saṅgīti* ("communal recitation") was no longer noticed, and the Third Council was simply taken as providing a precedent for "combating the forces of decay within the Saṅgha".[30] Obviously, the purification of the Saṅgha is linked to the preservation of the *sāsana* too.

We should also note that the holding of a council is linked to a persona of the king. Parākkamabāhu's readiness to purify the monastic order is an expression

of his desire to do service to the Buddha's *sāsana* and to humanity in general. The council is also linked to the establishment of unified, that is, valid monastic order, an issue that preoccupied Theravādin kings and monks throughout the medieval period.[31]

All of this is at a level of ideas of general significance and meaning, and not events. The actual event itself is absent in this passage. Just as it is a mistake to take events directly as ideas, by projecting a pattern from one event on to other events, so it is a mistake to take ideas directly as events, by assuming that a particular council is a simple realization of the general idea. Events and ideas need to be correlated with each other, not rendered identical. The councils of the medieval and late Theravāda were still unique events, even as they were shaped and given significance by Theravādin ideas about the councils. Any event is both more and less than these ideas may suggest. Michael Aung Thwin has shown that *sāsana* reforms in medieval Burma, modelled on the Third Council, had very tangible political and economic benefits for the kings who initiated the purifications.[32] The ideas about the councils affirm that some aspects of the events are not as crucial as others.

I have spoken of ideas about the councils shaping specific councils as events, but this occurred in only the most general manner. André Bareau, in his classic study of the first Buddhist councils, remarked that "as astonishing as it may be", Buddhist literature tells us almost nothing about the ritual and ceremony of a council.[33] There was actually very little guidance available to later Buddhists on the procedures for holding a council. Instead, Buddhist literature provides only normative motives for holding councils and information about the general benefits that would follow.

This lack of specificity about the procedures of a council allowed for some surprising interpretations of a *saṅgāyanā*. Late Theravādin inscriptions from Cambodia indicate that the word *saṅgāyanā* was used to designate a form of merit-making, in which a small number of monks recited or discussed a few texts over a number of days.[34] Another elaborate association of *saṅgīti* with specific acts of merit is found in the *Saddhammasaṅgaha*, a Pāli text probably composed in Thailand in the fourteenth or fifteenth century.[35] This text is often utilized as a historical source,[36] although it presents itself as an *ānisaṃsa* work, and describes the advantages that accrue to "those who themselves write (the *piṭakas*), those who make others to write, and those who approve of it".[37] It also gives an account of the benefits that come to those who listen to the *Dhamma*. These discussions of *ānisaṃsa* are preceded by a very innovative history of the councils in the Theravāda.

The *Saddhammasaṅgaha* describes seven comparable events, the usual three councils in India, plus four others in Sri Lanka. These other four are the recitation of the Vinaya by the monk Ariṭṭha at the time of the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka (which the *Saddhammasaṅgaha* numbers as the fourth council), the writing down of the canon at Aluvihara, Buddhaghosa's editing of the commentaries, and Parākkamabāhu's council which is

characterized as a revision of the canon and the source of the Pāli subcommentaries.

The description of an event like Buddhaghosa's translation of the *aṭṭhakathās* as similar to a council may seem surprising when viewed with a literal definition of a *saṅgīti*, but it makes good sense when seen as a historicist strategy for giving general significance to numerous small events. In the *Saddhammasaṅgaha*, paying for even a portion of a Buddhist book to be copied is classed as belonging to the same category of event as the first writing of the canon itself. It is possible that in the *Saddhammasaṅgaha* and the Cambodian inscriptions, we see an illustration of Hocart's thesis of "nationalization" by which "the king's state is reproduced in miniature by his vassals".[38]

Pāli chronicles composed in Thailand and Burma during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries share with the *Saddhammasaṅgaha* an interest in numbering councils, although each differs in its final count. The Burmese *Sāsanavaṃsa* counts four councils before a fifth which was held in the nineteenth century, while the Thai *Saṅgītiyavaṃsa* counts eight before a ninth held in Bangkok at the end of the eighteenth century.[39] This suggests that one strategy for reshaping the normative idea about *saṅgītis* was to number councils.

The device of numbering councils allowed for a few councils to be given greater importance than others, and thus out of this constructed sequence of events, a new normative idea could be fashioned. The variations in the constructed sequences, however, are quite striking, especially when they are viewed comparatively:

Mahāvaṃsa	*Saddhammasaṅgaha*
(Sri Lanka, ca. 5–6 AD)	(Thailand, ca. 14–15 AD)
1. Rājagaha	1. Rājagaha
2. Vesālī	2. Vesālī
3. Pāṭaliputta	3. Pāṭaliputta
	4. Ariṭṭha's recitation at Anuradhapura
	[Writing of canon; included but not numbered]
	[Buddhaghosa's editing of commentaries; included but unnumbered]
	[Parakkamabāhu's council; included but not numbered]

Saṅgītiyavaṃsa	*Sāsanavaṃsa*
(Thailand, 18 AD)	(Burma, 19 AD)
1. Rājagaha	1. Rājagaha
2. Vesālī	2. Vesālī
3. Pāṭaliputta	3. Pāṭaliputta
4. Ariṭṭha's recitation	4. Writing of canon
5. Writing of Canon	[Mindon's council at Mandalay; included but not numbered]
6. Buddhaghosa	

7. Parākkamabāhu's
   at Polonnaruva
8. Tilaka's at Chiang Mai
9. Rama I's at Bangkok

How might we explain these variations? Without going into the specifics of each case, a general explanation can be offered. As we have already seen with the *Saddhammasaṅgaha*, the ideas about the councils in the Theravāda were not fixed, but were subject to alteration by the events with which they were subsequently associated. It is thus not inconsequential that *Sāsanavaṃsa* and the *Saṅgītiyavaṃsa* were written in connection with some events that were also described as councils by their participants. Both councils were held in a context of concern about the immediate survival of the *sāsana*, with Mindon's Fifth Council held just after the Second Anglo-Burmese War, and Rama I's Ninth Council after the complete collapse of the Ayudhya kingdom.[40] Both councils were quite concerned with questions of monastic governance and factionalism within the Saṅgha, but neither was able to accomplish a complete unification of the Saṅgha, the conventional purpose of the great medieval councils. In both cases, the chronicles connected with these councils reconstituted the idea of a council, and shifted the normative means for preserving the tradition from the maintenance of a pure and unified monastic order to the possession and purification of an authoritative scripture. Unlike so many councils held in the medieval Theravāda, these two councils took as their central purpose the revision and writing of the *tipiṭaka*, which was portrayed as following a precedent. Theravādins, like "the English, [and] no less than Indian villagers or the faculty at the University of Chicago, act as if what was recently created and denominated a 'tradition' is part of their ancient heritage."[41]

We are finally in a position to answer the question with which I began: what were the councils in the Theravāda? They were events, unique occasions of considerable variety. Councils were held to recite texts, settle monastic disputes, bring about monastic unity, preserve the *sāsana*, display the power of a king, earn merit, and so on. Some councils succeeded in their aims more than others. But the councils are also a varied set of ideas, all of which were used to establish the continuing validity of the Theravāda as a tradition.

Seeing the councils as both events and ideas also suggests how they should be studied. We need 'empirical' research into the actual accomplishments of each council, as far as our sources allow. Some of these accomplishments may appear decidedly impious, such as the economic benefits that fell to a king from monastic reform. We also need to keep in mind the historical importance of the idea of a council for understanding the collective actions of those persons who convened, participated in, and accepted the authority of a council. In turn, we need to be alert to ways that events left an imprint on these normative ideas; we need a history of the reception of these ideas in subsequent contexts.

Only when we begin to trace the history of phenomena with a dual character

as events and ideas will we begin to see the Theravāda as it truly is: not as an unchanging conceptual system, not as a static structure, but as a complex movement in a perpetual process of constitution and reconstitution. With such a history, we will see the Theravāda *yathābhūtam* – as it was, as it became, as it is.[42]

Notes

* An earlier version of this paper was presented as part of a panel on "Rethinking Theravāda Buddhism" at the Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C., March 1989. I have benefited greatly from the papers and comments of my co-panelists at that meeting (George Bond, John Ross Carter, Steven Collins, Charles Keyes, and Frank Reynolds).

1 Louis de la Vallée Poussin, "Councils and Synods: Buddhist", *ERE*, vol. 4, 179.

2 Bernard Cohn, "History and Anthropology: The State of Play", in *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1987, 47.

3 Indeed this is one of the purposes of the Buddhist Forum. See Tadeusz Skorupski's Introduction to *The Buddhist Forum*, vol. I, London, SOAS, 1990, 1.

4 C. S. Prebish, "A Review of Scholarship on the Buddhist Councils", *JAS*, 1974, 239.

5 Bibliographic information on this vigorous and inconclusive debate may be conveniently found in J.W. de Jong, *A Brief History of Buddhist Studies in Europe and America*, Varanasi, Bharat-Bharati, 1976, 30–31, 67, and in Prebish's article, cited in note 4.

6 My comments here depend greatly on the work of Steven Collins in his paper, "On the Very Idea of the Pāli Canon", *JPTS*, vol. 14, forthcoming.

7 Charles Keyes, "Merit-Transference in the Kammic Theory of Popular Theravāda Buddhism", in Charles Keyes & E. Valentine Daniel, eds., *Karma: An Anthropological Inquiry*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983, 272. Compare Richard Gombrich's comments: "The contents of sacred texts are not simply reproduced in the doctrines of the religions which venerate them; there must be interpretation and selective emphasis. This is obviously true when the corpus of sacred literature is large, as in Christianity and Buddhism. Historians of these religions may therefore ask why certain doctrines and certain scriptures have been emphasized at the expense of others." R. Gombrich, "Buddhist Karma and Social Control", *CSSH*, 17, 1975, 212.

8 François Bizot, *Le figuier à cinq branches*, Paris, EFEO, 1976, 21. This orientation has been elaborated very convincingly in the paper by Steven Collins cited in note 6.

9 Bernard Cohn, *op. cit.*, 45, speaks of the same distinction in the following way: "We write of an event as being unique, something that happens only once, yet every culture has a means to convert the uniqueness into a general and transcendent meaningfulness through the language members of the society speak ... [For example], the death of a ruler may be mourned by rituals which turn the biographic fact of a death into a public statement relating not only to a particular ruler but to rulership *per se*. In many societies ritual transforms uniqueness into structure."

10 See Charles Keyes, *The Golden Peninsula*, New York, Macmillan, 1977, 86: "If the true Buddhist is one who seeks to become an Arahat, the fully perfected monk who attains enlightenment, then quite obviously Buddhism could never be a popular religion. It would be a religion of only a small number of adepts. Ancient Buddhism may have been such a religion, but it underwent a transformation first in the third century B.C., when it was brought under the patronage of King Asoka who set an example for other ruling elites. Theravāda Buddhism was further transformed in the fifth century

A.D. through the theological interpretations of Buddhaghosa and several of his contemporaries. Finally, it went through yet another transformation in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries when it became a universal religion, a religion for peasant farmer as well as for monk and king."

11 For an example of a failure to correlate the two notions of 'event' and 'idea', see the critique by Michael Carrithers of Stanley Tambiah on the subject of Parākkamabāhu's council in twelfth-century Sri Lanka. Carrithers writes: "In *World Conqueror* Tambiah, pursuing the relationship between kings and monks, dwells at length on the purification of the Buddhist order carried out by Parākkamabāhu I of Sri Lanka. He argues that this was patterned after a similar act of the Emperor Aśoka, preceded other similar royal acts, and was therefore part of a pervasive pattern in the relationship between royalty and the Buddhist order throughout Buddhist history. On this account all purifications were analogous, the working out of a particular timeless relation between kings and monks. But such an account leaves out the single most important feature of Parākkamabāhu I's reform, namely that it was a radically new interpretation of the king's role, an interpretation which set a new pattern for Theravāda and Theravādin kings." (Michael Carrithers, "Buddhists without History", *CIS*, N.S. 21, 1987, 167.)

Tambiah's rejoinder to Carrithers, in the same issue of *CIS*, does show a movement towards the combination of heuristic concepts that I have in mind: "Carrithers ... seem(s) to have the simplistic notion that there are only two kinds of historical interpretation possible — there is either a stasis and repetition of the past or there is a radical change. (He does) not seem to appreciate both the complexity and the pervasiveness of a historical condition in which certain kinds of persistence *coexist* with certain kinds of change of state, and such amalgams and syntheses of varying kinds and varying degrees of cohesion and tension characterise much of the so-called flow of history." (Stanley Tambiah, "At the Confluence of Anthropology, History, and Indology", 194.)

12 Hermann Oldenberg, "Introduction", in *The Vinaya Piṭakaṃ*, ed. by H. Oldenberg, London, Williams & Norgate, 1879, xxvii.

13 Jean Przyluski, *Le concile de Rājagṛha*, quoted in Prebish, 243.

14 La Vallée Poussin, *ERE*, vol. 4, 179.

15 La Vallée Poussin, *ibid.*, 179.

16 R.F. Gombrich, "Recovering the Buddha's Message", *The Buddhist Forum*, vol. I, 6. It is interesting to note that Minayeff took the minor details of the accounts as "to some extent historical" (cited in La Vallée Poussin, 182). Thus both the plot and the details of the first councils have been described as both fact and fiction. Cf. Richard Gombrich, "How the Mahāyāna Began", *The Buddhist Forum*, vol. I, 26.

17 It is also the case that the general scholarly tendency now current is to give the Buddhist accounts "the benefit of the doubt", in contrast to the inclination of scholars around the turn of this century. K.R. Norman, for example, writes: "Although we may have reservations about the texts which were dealt with at the first council, there is no reason to doubt the general way in which it was held". (K.R. Norman, *Pāli Literature*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1983.) At one time, this would have been a highly provocative statement.

18 R.F. Gombrich, "How the Mahāyāna Began", 25–26.

19 K.R. Norman, *Pāli Literature*, 13.

20 See *Mahāvaṃsa*, 39:57; 41:2; 44:46; 44:76ff.; 48:71; 51:64; 52:10; 52:44; 73:11ff.; 78:2ff.; 84:7; 91:10; 100:44.

21 An event in the medieval period which does approximate to the conventional functions usually attributed to a "communal recitation", such as preserving knowledge and transmitting texts, is Vijayabāhu III's patronage of a rewriting of the canon

(*Mahāvaṃsa* 81:40–45). Significantly, the participants in this event were laymen, and it is not described as either a *saṅgīti* or a *saṅgāyanā*.
The event which perhaps comes closest to an actual "communal recitation" is the scripture revision and recitation sponsored by King Tilaka at Chiang Mai in 1475–7: this event is described in the *Jinakālamālī* (London: PTS, 1962), 115. Again, this event is not described in the *Jinakālamālī* as a *saṅgāyanā*, although later texts in the Thai tradition (e.g. *Saṅgitiyavaṃsa*) do accept it as such. It is also significant that this event was probably held after the writing of the *Saddhammasaṅgaha*, which radically recast the traditional idea of a *saṅgāyanā*.

22 On the *bhāṇaka* system, see E.W. Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Migoda, D.S. Puswella, 1946, 24–32. Adikaram traces this system of reciters, but also suggests that Buddhaghosa saw the *bhāṇaka* system as making *saṅgāyanā* unnecessary' as a means of preserving and transmitting the canon.

23 Heinz Bechert, "Aśokas 'schismenedikt' und der Begrift Saṅghabheda", *WZKSO*, 5, 1961, 18–52, and, by the same author, "Theravāda Buddhist Saṅgha: Some General Observations on Historical and Political Factors in its Development", *JAS*, 29, 1970, 761–778. See also Heinz Bechert, "The Importance of Aśoka's So-called Schism Edict", *Indological and Buddhist Studies: Volume in Honour of Professor J.W. de Jong*, Canberra, Faculty of Asian Studies, 1982, 61–68.

24 H. Bechert, "Theravāda Buddhist Saṅgha", 764.

25 On the historicist transformation of the Pali canon, see S. Collins's paper cited in n. 7.

26 See, for example, Heinz Bechert, "The Beginnings of Buddhist Historiography: *Mahāvaṃsa* and Political Thinking", in Bardwell L. Smith, ed., *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Ceylon*, Chambersburg, PA, Anima, 1978. In another vein, Stanley Tambiah, in *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1977, says that "one of the most important features of (the) Theravāda Buddhist politics is their active *consciousness of historical continuity* (page 518, emphasis in the original).

27 David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1985, 40. On the past as a sanction in the Theravāda tradition, see S. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, 528ff.

28 *Mahāvaṃsa*, 78, 27.

29 *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, London, Humphrey Milford, 1928, II, 274–275. Concerning this council, see the exchange between Michael Carrithers and Stanley Tambiah cited in note 11.

30 H. Bechert, "Theravāda Buddhist Saṅgha", 763.

31 Councils were held, it seems, for the purpose of reordination of monks in a valid monastic lineage. See François Bizot, *Les traditions de la pabbajja en Asie du Sud-Est*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988.

32 Michael Aung Thwin, "The Role of *Sasana* Reform in Burmese History: Economic Dimensions of a Religious Purification", *JAS*, 38, 1979, 671–688. See also Victor B. Lieberman, "The Political Significance of Religious Wealth in Burmese History: Some Further Thoughts", *JAS*, 39, 1980, 753–69 and Michael Aung Thwin, "A Reply to Lieberman", *JAS*, 40, 1980, 87–90.

33 André Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1955, 137.

34 See the following articles by Saveros Pou (also known as Lewitz), "Inscriptions modernes d'Angkor 34 et 38", *BEFEO*, 62, 1975, 286, 290; "Inscriptions modernes d'Angkor 35, 36, 37, et 39", *BEFEO* 61, 1974, 316; "Les inscriptions modernes d'Angkor vat", *JA*, 260, 1972, 123. Although the inscriptions are called modern, they are all from the 14–18th centuries.

35 *Saddhamma-saṅgaha*, ed. Ven. N. Saddhananda, *JPTS*, 4, 1890, 21–90. See also the

translation by Bimala Churn Law, *A Manual of Buddhist Historical Traditions*, Calcutta, University of Calcutta, 1963.

36 K.R. Norman calls it a "bibliographic text", and utilizes it as a source for information about the writing of different Buddhist texts; see K.R. Norman, *Pāli Literature*, 179.

37 B.C. Law, *A Manual of Buddhist Historical Traditions*, 99.

38 Quoted in S. Tambiah, *World Conqueror*, 74.

39 *Sāsanavaṃsa*, ed. by M. Bode, London, PTS, 1897; tr. as *The History of the Buddha's Religion*, by B.C. Law, London, PTS, 1952; *Saṅgītiyavaṃsa*, Bangkok, n.p., 1977.

40 See, for brief accounts of these councils, E.M. Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma: A Study of Monastic Sectarianism and Leadership*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1975, 112–13, 276–78, 335 and C. Reynolds, "The Buddhist Monkhood in Nineteenth Century Thailand", unpublished Ph D dissertation, Cornell University, 1973, 50–55.

41 Bernard Cohn, "History and Anthropology: The State of Play", 45.

42 I owe this formulation to John Ross Carter.

27

ŚAIKṢA-DHARMAS REVISITED

Further considerations of Mahāsāṃghika origins

Charles S. Prebish

Source: *History of Religions* 35, 3 (1996): 258–70.

In current Buddhology, there are two primary but opposing hypotheses to explain the beginnings of Indian Buddhist sectarianism. The first, advocated by André Bareau, presumes the schism that separated the Mahāsāṃghikas and Sthaviras to have resulted from disciplinary laxity on the part of the future Mahāsāṃghikas, coupled with concerns over five theses predicated by the monk Mahādeva. The second hypothesis, more recently promulgated by Janice J. Nattier and myself, suggests that the initial schism resulted not from disciplinary laxity but solely from unwarranted expansion of the root Vinaya text by the future Sthaviras.

One of the major features of the second thesis revolves around the degree to which it can be demonstrated that the Sthaviras may have expanded the root Vinaya text. A comparison of two very early Vinayas, by the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādins (in Sanskrit) and by the Theravādins (in Pāli), amply shows that the two texts bear remarkable coincidence in all but one category: the Śaikṣa-dharmas. In that category, the Mahāsāṃghika text posits sixty-seven items, while the Theravāda text posits seventy-five.

To date, no scholars have addressed this circumstance with specificity. Consequently, in this article, I examine the Śaikṣa-dharmas of the Prātimokṣa-sūtra of each *nikāya*, isolating the divergent rules and relating them to the significant, major concerns expressed at the second council of Vaiśālī, an arguably historical event that pre-dated the actual sectarian split in early Indian Buddhism by no more than a few decades. I argue that the divergent rules in the two *nikāyas* demonstrate an attempt on the part of the future Sthaviras to circumvent a potential *saṃghabheda* (split in the community) by making more explicit the general areas of disagreement that precipitated the second council. In so doing, they inadvertently provoked the split they were so diligently trying to avoid.

Prior to Marcel Hofinger's *Étude sur le concile de Vaiśālī* (published in 1946), it was rather ordinary to assign the beginnings of Buddhist sectarianism to the events surrounding the council of Vaiśālī and to conclude that the initial

schism that separated the Mahāsāṃghikas from the Sthaviras in early Indian Buddhism resulted from the dual problematic of disciplinary laxity on the part of the future Mahāsāṃghikas and the famous five theses of the monk Mahādeva focusing on the nature of the arahant. This council has received a substantial amount of consideration in the scholarly literature,[1] and the bulk of it does not need to be rehearsed here. Nor is it necessary to consider new information regarding the date of the historical Buddha that casts fresh light on the specific date of the Vaiśālī council.[2] What does need to be considered is a review of the most recent general conclusions regarding the Vaiśālī council.

With the possible exception of R. O. Franke and Paul Demiéville,[3] virtually all scholars agree that the Vaiśāli council was a historical event. While Hofinger states it quite directly: "The council of Vaiśālī is not a fiction," Bareau is indirect: "We see, therefore, that the hypothesis of the historicity of the council of Vaiśālī appears as much more defensible than the contrary hypothesis."[4] Several Vinayas (namely, the Mahāsāṃghika, Sarvāstivādin, Theravādin, and Dharmaguptaka texts) even identify the site of the council as the Vālukārāma monastery, although this may be a later addition. Further, all sources agree that the primary focus of the event was the now well known issue of the ten illicit practices of the Vṛjiputraka *bhikṣus* who dwelled in Vaiśālī. Nonetheless, there is serious disagreement on the interpretation of the council proceedings. While Hofinger has admirably traced the rejection of all ten points in the Pāli Pātimokkha,[5] Demiéville aggressively pursues the thesis of Mahāsāṃghika laxity on the basis of the mention of only one of the ten points (i.e., the possession of gold and silver) in their council record. He writes, "Consequently, even on the single point of discipline which the Mahāsāṃghikas mention in their recitation of the council of Vaiśālī, their Vinaya turns out to be infinitely more lax than the Pāli Vinaya."[6] However, even a cursory study of the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya reveals that all ten points are included therein, and Bareau documents this carefully using the Chinese version of the text (*Taishō* 1425). He concludes about the Mahāsāṃghikas: "If they do not speak of the 9 other customs, this is not because they approved of them, since they implicitly condemn them elsewhere. . . . The 9 customs of the monks of Vaiśālī, therefore, could not have been one of the causes of the schism which separated the Mahāsāṃghikas from the Sthaviras, as the Sinhalese chronicles affirm and, following them, certain historians of Buddhism. In fact, the two sects were in accord on this point, as M. Hofinger has well shown."[7] A study of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin texts preserved in Sanskrit yields a similar result.[8] In addition, the Mahāsāṃghikas could not be considered to be eastern dwellers (i.e., Prācīnaka, in Sanskrit the same title as the Vṛjiputrakas), as Hofinger would like to maintain (by adjusting the geographical tension theory of Przyluski[9] so as to categorize the Sthavira, Mahīśāsaka, Dharmaguptaka, and Sarvāstivādin *nikāyas* as western dwellers). On this point, Bareau asserts, "It is without doubt imprudent to draw conclusions on the primitive geographical redress of the sects from indications as fragmentary as those furnished by our recitations."[10] Although Demiéville has serious

doubts about the historicity of the Vaiśālī council, he makes the following suggestions: "For my part, I cannot refrain from seeing in the tradition relative to the council of Vaiśālī, above all, a reflection of this conflict between rigorism and laxism, between monasticism and laicism, between 'sacred' and 'profane', which traverses all the history of Buddhism and which, *after having provoked the schism between the Sthaviras and Mahāsāṃghikas*, is expressed later by the opposition between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna.[11] Despite Demiéville's aggressive claim to the contrary, there is nothing in any of the Vinaya council accounts of the various *nikāyas* that attests to the separation of Sthaviras and Mahāsāṃghikas at this point. Bareau confirms the absence of sectarianism quite assertively when he proclaims: "The primitive version is, as M. Hofinger has well shown, anterior to the first schism which separated the Mahāsāṃghikas from the Sthaviras"[12]

Although the famous *daśa-vastūni* (or "ten points") and the council of Vaiśālī seem effectively eliminated from the historical actuality of the initial schism in Indian Buddhist history, the notorious five theses of Mahādeva remained a primary causal factor in scholarly arguments. Convinced that the first *saṃghabheda* was historically removed from the Vaiśālī council, Bareau developed a new theory, one that turned on (1) the notion that laxity on the part of the future Mahāsāṃghikas developed *after* the Vaiśālī council (although it is not precisely clear just how this laxity develops), and (2) the five theses of Mahādeva. Moreover, it postulated a noncanonical council held at Pāṭaliputra in the year 137 A.N., from which the schism emerged. Bareau's theory is presented in full on pages 88–111 of *Les premiers counciles bouddhiques* and, until 1977, was rather widely accepted as a brilliant and ingenious solution to a knotty Buddhological problem. In 1977, Janice J. Nattier and I criticized Bareau's theory, suggesting in its place first, that

> Mahādeva has nothing to do with the primary schism between the Mahāsāṃghikas and Sthaviras, emerging in a historical period considerably later than previously supposed, and taking his place in the sectarian movement by instigating an internal schism within the already existing Mahāsāṃghika school. Second, that the sole cause of the initial schism in Buddhist history pertained to matters of Vinaya, but rather than representing a reaction of orthodox Buddhists to Mahāsāṃghikas laxity, as maintained by both Demiéville and Bareau, represents a reaction on the part of the future Mahāsāṃghikas to unwarranted expansion of the root Vinaya text on the part of the future Sthaviras.[13]

The argument concerning Mahādeva's five theses is complex[14] and, until quite recently, has not received much additional attention. Lance Cousins, however, has published a fresh, new discussion of the five points, dividing their historical development into three phases,[15] and confirming our hypothesis that the five points of Mahādeva were not involved in the first schism. Cousins's

article additionally utilizes important material on the Pudgalavādins, published by Thich Thien Chau[16] and Peter Skilling,[17] not available to earlier researchers.

Our hypothesis for the rise of Buddhist sectarianism relies heavily on the Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra, translated into Chinese between 317 and 420 C.E., but which, according to Bareau,[18] was likely to have been composed by around 300 C.E., thus representing the oldest of all the sectarian treatises. This text relates an episode in which an old monk rearranges and augments the traditional Vinaya, said to have been codified by Kāśyapa at the alleged first council of Rājagṛha, consequently causing dissension among the monks that required the king's arbitration and eventually precipitated the first schism. The relevant passage of the text (*Taishō* 1465, p. 900b) is translated on page 189 of Étienne Lamotte's *Histoire du bouddhisme indien*. It is clear from the *Taishō* passage that from the Mahāsāṃghika perspective, the real issue culminating in the schism was Vinaya expansion. The Mahāsāṃghikas are designated in the passage as those who study the "ancient Vinaya," and this tallies extremely well with the conclusions of Bareau, W. Pachow, Hofinger, Erich Frauwallner, and Gustav Roth that the Mahāsāṃghika (and Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin) Vinaya represents the most ancient of all the Vinaya traditions. Further, each of the above-cited scholars reaches his conclusion by applying a separate critical technique (Bareau using text length of the Śaikṣa section of the Prātimokṣa-sūtra; Pachow using comparative Prātimokṣa study; Hofinger using all second council materials in the various Vinayas; Frauwallner using an analysis of the Skandhakas of the various Vinayas; and Roth using an examination of the language and grammar of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin texts preserved in Sanskrit). It also tallies well with the conclusion of the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien, who regarded the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya as the original.[19] Cousins agrees with the above conclusion heartily, in commenting on the Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra: "Rather it sees the Mahāsāṅghikas as the conservative party which has preserved the original *Vinaya* unchanged against the reformist efforts to create a reorganized and stricter version." He goes on: "Clearly the Mahāsāṅghikas are in fact a school claiming to follow the *Vinaya* of the original, undivided *saṅgha*, i.e. the *mahāsāṅgha*,"[20] As to why the future Sthaviras would choose to enlarge the Vinaya, Nattier and I conclude:

> It is not unlikely that the council of Vaiśālī, in representing the first real threat of division in the quasi-unified Buddhist saṃgha, made all Buddhists aware of the problem of concord now that the Buddha was long dead. In seeking to insure the continued unity that all Buddhists must have desired, they simply began to expand the disciplinary code in the seemingly appropriate direction. Just as the respect for orthodoxy inhibited the participants at the alleged first council of Rājagṛha from excluding the "lesser and minor points" which the Buddha had noted to be expendable, the same respect for orthodoxy inhibited the future Mahāsāṃghikas from tolerating this new endeavor, however well intentioned it was.[21]

This latter conclusion also gains support from Cousins:

> What is important is that the picture which now emerges is one in which the earliest division of the *saṅgha* was primarily a matter of monastic discipline. The Mahāsāṅghikas were essentially a conservative party resisting a reformist attempt to tighten discipline. The likelihood is that they were initially the larger body, representing the mass of the community, the *mahāsāṅgha*. Subsequently, doctrinal disputes arose among the reformists as they grew in numbers and gathered support. Eventually these led to divisions on the basis of doctrine. For a very long time, however, there must have been many fraternities (*nikāyas*) based only on minor *vinaya* differences.[22]

If we acknowledge, in light of the above materials, that our hypothesis offers the most fruitful potential for identifying the causal basis of the first sectarian division in Buddhism, it becomes necessary to explore further the earliest Prātimokṣa-sūtra texts extant in hopes of isolating precisely which rules appear to be those appended to the root Vinaya text by the future Sthaviras. I have argued elsewhere[23] that comparative Prātimokṣa study involves considerably more investigation than simply creating concordance tables of correlation between the texts of the various schools preserved in Pāli, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan. In an earlier article, I maintain that "a more sensible approach would be the developmental, concentrating more on the contents of the various rules than their numbers."[24] In examining the Śaikṣa-dharma section of the Sanskrit Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin text and the Theravādin text in Pali, numbering sixty-seven and seventy-five rules, respectively, one finds this approach quite instructive, despite the fact, now acknowledged by most scholars, that the Theravādins can in no way be historically identified as the Sthaviras of the first schism.

While many scholars downplay the significance of the Śaikṣa-dharmas in the overall scheme of the Prātimokṣa, John Holt takes the opposite approach in concluding, "These rules are much more than mere social etiquette. . . . The motive which generated their inclusion into the disciplinary code was simply this: perfect control of inward demeanor leads to perfect control and awareness of outward expression, even the most minute public expressions."[25] As such, they are critical to an understanding of early Buddhist sectarian history. I. B. Horner, in her classic translation of the Pāli Vinaya Piṭaka, arranges these rules into three sections: (1) rules 1–56, focusing on etiquette and behavior on the daily alms tour, (2) rules 57–72, focusing on teaching the Dharma with propriety, and (3) rules 73–75, focusing on inappropriate ways of urinating and spitting.[26] In pursuit of more specific definition, I have suggested another classification, addressing the functionality of the entire section, which can be broken down as follows: (1) the robe section, (2) the section on village visiting, (3) the section on Dharma instruction, and (4) the section on eating.[27] Irrespective of which classification is preferred, a comparison of the two texts in question involves

considerably more than a facile location of eight rules, primarily because the rules do not correspond directly by number.

After careful comparative cross-referencing between the two texts, four rules in the Sanskrit Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin text are found to have no counterpart in the Pāli text. These rules include numbers 20, 23, 27, and 56.[28]

Rule 20 reads:

> na osaktikāya[29] antaragṛhe niṣīdiṣyāmīti śikṣākaraṇīyā /
> ["I will not sit down amongst the houses in the *utsaktikā* posture," is a precept that should be observed.]

Rule 23 reads:

> na antaragṛhe niṣaṇṇo hastaṃ kokṛtyam vā pādakaukṛtyamvā kariṣyāmīti śikṣākaraṇīyā/
> ["Having sat down amongst the houses, I will not do evil with the feet or do evil with the hands," is a precept that should be observed.]

Rule 27 reads:

> nāvakīrṇṇakārakaṃ piṇḍapātram paribhuṃjiṣyāmīti śikṣākaraṇīyā /
> ["I will not eat alms food [while] making confused [speech]," is a precept that should be observed.]

Rule 56 reads:

> na osaktikāya[30] niṣaṇṇasyāgilānasya dharmandeśayiṣyāmīti śikṣākaraṇīyā/
> ["In the *utsaktikā* posture, I will not teach Dharma to one seated who is not ill," is a precept that should be observed.]

It is extremely significant that two of the four Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin rules (rules 23 and 27) cited above have no counterpart in the various texts of the other schools. The remaining two (rules 20 and 56) seem to involve a posture cited in no other text, with the Mūlasarvāstivādin version possibly being excepted (and then, only if the term *osaktikā* is a direct correspondent to *utsaktikā* as found in the latter text). Further, the grammatical variants of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin text were once considered to be extremely corrupt Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit forms. Franklin Edgerton, commenting on Senart's edition of the Sanskrit text of the Mahāvastu, said: "Perhaps the most difficult and corrupt, as also probably the oldest and most important, of all BHS works is the Mahāvastu. ... It was edited by Émile Senart in three stout volumes, 1882–1897. Senart's extensive notes often let the reader perceive the despair which constantly threatened to overwhelm him."[31] More recent scholarship has presented an entirely different picture of the language of the

Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin texts, one that is clearly consistent with the original hypothesis of this article. Gustav Roth's extensive work with the texts of this *nikāya* leads him to conclude (in 1966): "I would call this language the Prakrit-cum-quasi-Sanskrit of the Ārya Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādins. . . . The regular recurrence of Prakrit forms shows that they cannot be taken for grammatical mistakes. They belong to the stock of the language. . . . This coexistence of Prakrit and Sanskrit forms side by side has to be acknowledged as the new type of a language through and through composite in its nature."[32] By 1970, when Roth's edition of the Bikṣuṇī-Vinaya of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādins appeared, his position on the language and grammar of this *nikāya* remained fundamentally consistent with his earlier conclusions.[33] My grammatical notes in *Buddhist Monastic Discipline* tend to confirm Roth's judgment. That the language of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin text appears to be distinct unto itself, coupled with a number of Śaikṣa-dharmas that appear in no other Prātimokṣa texts of the various *nikāyas*, lends credence to the supposition, noted above, that this text was extremely ancient. In light of the other materials presented, it is not unreasonable to assume that this may well have been the root Vinaya text expanded upon by the future Sthavirans. Since the Mahāsāṃghika trunk schools developed in a lineage separate from that of the Sthavira *nikāyas*, it is imperative to see how, if at all, the Sthavira *nikāyas* may have expanded the root Vinaya text. While the Theravādins are certainly less ancient historically than the Mahāsāṃghikas, their complete Vinaya is no doubt the earliest of all the preserved versions of the Sthavira schools. As such, its additional Sekhiyadhammas (in Sanskrit Śaikṣa-dharmas) are exceedingly important.

No less than twelve rules in the Pāli Pātimokkha have no counterpart in the Sanskrit Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin text. These include numbers 3, 4, 16, 18, 20, 30, 31, 33, 40, 42, 54, and 68.[34]
Rule 3 reads:

> supaṭicchanno antaraghare gamissāmīti sikkhā karaṇīyā/
> ["I shall go well covered amongst the houses," is a precept that should be observed.]

Rule 4 reads:

> supaṭicchanno antaraghare nisīdissāmīti sikkhā karaṇīyā/
> ["I shall sit down well covered amongst the houses," is a precept that should be observed.]

Rule 16 reads:

> na kāyappacālakaṃ antaraghare nisīdissāmīti sikkhā karaṇīyā/
> ["I will not sit down amongst the houses shaking the body," is a precept that should be observed.]

Rule 18 reads:

na bāhuppacālakaṃ antaraghare nisīdissāmīti sikkhā karaṇīyā/
["I will not sit down amongst the houses shaking the arms," is a precept that should be observed.]

Rule 20 reads:

na sīsappacālakaṃ antaraghare nisīdissāmīti sikkhā karaṇīyā/
["I will not sit down amongst the houses shaking the head," is a precept that should be observed.]

Rule 30 reads:

samatittikaṃ piṇḍapātaṃ paṭiggahessāmīti sikkha karaṇīyā/
["I shall accept alms food up to the brim (of the bowl)," is a precept that should be observed.]

Rule 31 reads:

sakkaccaṃ piṇḍapātaṃ bhuñjissāmīti sikkhā karaṇīyā/
["I shall eat alms food respectfully," is a precept that should be observed.]

Rule 33 reads:

sapadānaṃ piṇḍapātaṃ bhuñjissāmīti sikkhā karaṇīyā/
["I shall eat alms food uninterruptedly," is a precept that should be observed.]

Rule 40 reads:

parimaṇḍalaṃ ālopaṃ karissāmīti sikkhā karaṇīyā/
["I shall separate the morsels into (little) balls," is a precept that should be observed.]

Rule 42 reads:

na bhuñjamāno sabbaṃ hatthaṃ mukhe pakkhipissāmīti sikkhā karaṇīyā/
["I shall not put the whole hand in the mouth when eating," is a precept that should be observed.]

Rule 54 reads:

> na oṭṭhanillehakaṃ bhuñjissāmīti sikkhā karaṇīyā/
> ["I shall not lick the lips when eating," is a precept that should be observed.]

Rule 68 reads:

> na chamāyaṃ nisīditvā āsane nisinnassa agilānassa dḥammaṃ desissāmīti sikkhā karaṇīyā/
> ["I shall not teach Dharma while sitting on the ground to one sitting on a seat who is not ill," is a precept that should be observed.]

A summary of the twelve Pāli rules reveals that, according to Horner's classification, eleven fall into her category of etiquette and behavior on the daily alms tour, while the twelfth fall into her category described as teaching the Dharma with propriety. With my categorization, six rules are concerned with eating, three with village visiting, two with robes, and one with Dharma instruction. Nevertheless, a composite of the two approaches demonstrates that all twelve rules focus on two general areas of conduct: behavior in the village and various aspects of eating. Precisely because respect for the individual monks and nuns was a necessary requisite for successful maintenance of the entire monastic *saṃgha* by the laity, this dual emphasis on behavior in the village and various aspects of eating is not at all surprising. Holt proclaims this rather dramatically:

> We must also point out that one's outward appearance was symbolic in at least two ways. In the first case, *bhikkhus* were considered to be "sons of the Buddha" and objects of veneration for the laity. To appear in public in a disheveled fashion was insulting not only to the Buddha, but to the laity who considered *bhikkhus* as examples of high Buddhist spirituality and worthy receptors of meritorious acts of lay piety. In the second case, *bhikkhus* were bearers of the *Dhamma* and the chief source of learning for the laity. Casual attention to one's public habits would reflect a similar casual regard for the teaching of the *Dhamma*.[35]

Nor is it surprising to evaluate these apparently expanded rules in terms of eating protocol in light of the fact that five of the ten *daśa-vastūni* of the Vaiśālī council concerned matters of food and/or drink. Equally, the other five points of the council, in the most general sense, address matters of individual and communal respect. In other words, if the Buddhist community was plagued by the genuine threat of *saṃghabheda* in the aftermath of the Council of Vaiśālī, and specifically with regard to matters of personal and institutional integrity and ethical conduct, it might well be both logical and reasonable to tighten the monastic code by the addition of a number of rules designed to make the

required conduct more explicit. Of course, Vinaya expansion is precisely what the Śāriputraparipṛcchāsūtra records as the cause of Buddhism's initial schism, commenting as well that it was respect for the orthodoxy of the "ancient Vinaya" that prohibited the future Mahāsāṃghikas from accepting the addition, irrespective of motive.

Bareau, in *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, comes almost to the same conclusion as presented above when he says, "One may justly think that the cause of the quarrel resided in the composition of the code of the monks and, more specifically, in the list of the śikṣakaraṇīya [precepts that should be observed],"[36] but he dismisses the conclusion immediately: "It is improbable that such a serious conflict could have been provoked by dissension on such a trivial subject."[37] Yet Bareau also concedes that the majority of points for which the Vṛjiputraka *bhikṣus* were reproved were no more important than the ones cited here. We think that it is here that Bareau and others have missed an enormously valuable opportunity for understanding the growth of early Indian Buddhist sectarianism. We may never know with absolute certainty whether the rules cited above were precisely the rules to which the Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra alludes. Nonetheless, a comparison of the Pāli precepts in question with the extant Vinaya texts of other early Buddhist *nikāyas* suggests a high degree of correlation.[38] This is especially significant since these non-Mahāsāṃghika *nikāyas* all emerged from a common basis in the original Sthavira trunk group. It also correlates almost identically with the Chinese version of the Upāliparipṛcchā-sūtra, *Taishō* 1466 (Yu-po-li wên-fu-ching).[39] Further, as the Sthavira trunk subdivided internally over the next several centuries into many other *nikāyas*, each sect sought to underscore its own position with regard to personal and institutional conduct (and especially with regard to the geographic, communal circumstance in which it found itself) by appending additional rules in the Śaikṣa-dharma section of its Prātimokṣa-sūtra. As a result, we find 96 rules in the Chinese version of the Kāśyapīya text, 100 rules in the Chinese version of the Mahīśāsaka text, 100 rules in the Chinese Dharmaguptaka text, 108 rules in the Sanskrit and Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivādin texts, and 113 rules in the Sanskrit and Chinese Sarvāstivādin texts. For this reason, the *nikāyas* became distinct not only by the doctrines they espoused, but by their rules for communal dwelling and behavior. In some cases, these differences are of monumental importance. The Dharmaguptaka text, for example, advances twenty-six rules in this section to delegate appropriate conduct at a stūpa. Apart from what this tells us, historically, about the Dharmaguptaka school, it offers significant insight into the ritual applications of Dharmaguptaka doctrinal affinities. In the light of the work by Hirakawa, Schopen, and Williams on the role of stūpa worship in the rise of Mahāyāna, this Vinaya material is critically important.[40] Moreover, it has long been acknowledged that the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya was the most widely accepted Vinaya in China.[41] Consequently, one must ponder whether its incorporation of these twenty-six rules for stūpa worship, more extensively delineated than in any other Vinaya, was the primary basis for the high status of its Vinaya

in the development of Chinese Buddhism. No doubt, other similar insights might well emerge from a renewed interest in this category of Vinaya rules, long overlooked, but still overwhelmingly fertile. At the very least, the specifics of the first great *saṃghabheda* in Buddhism are less mysterious.

Notes

1 See especially Marcel Hofinger, *Étude sur le concile de Vaiśālī* (Louvain: Bureaux du Muséon, 1946); André Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955); Paul Demiéville, "À propos du concile de Vaiśālī, "*T'oung Pao* 40 (1951): 239–96; and Charles S. Prebish, "A Review of Scholarship on the Buddhist Councils," *Journal of Asian Studies* 33, no. 2 (February 1974): 239–54.

2 A summary of the basic argument regarding the new approach to Buddha's historical dating is best revealed by Richard Gombrich's article "Dating the Buddha: A Red Herring Revealed," in *Die Datierung des historischen Buddha*, pt. 2, ed. Heinz Bechert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), pp. 239–59, in which Gombrich dates the death of the Buddha to around 405 B.C.E. (actually between 411 and 399). A concise statement of the position on the Vaiśālī council, dating the council to 70–80 years after Buddha's death, is Lance S. Cousins's "The 'Five Points' and the Origins of the Buddhist Schools," *The Buddhist Forum*, vol. 2, ed. Tadeusz Skorupski (New Deli: Heritage, 1992), pp. 27–31 and 54–60.

3 Refer to R. O. Franke, "The Buddhist Councils at Rājagaha and Vesūlī as Alleged in Cullavagga XI, XII," *Journal of the Pali Text Society* (1908), p. 70; and Demiéville, p. 258.

4 See Hofinger, p. 249, and Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 87.

5 Hofinger, pp. 216 (and nn. 1–3) and 217 (and nn. 1–7).

6 Demiéville, p. 275.

7 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 78.

8 See Charles S. Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline: The Sanskrit Prātimokṣa Sūtras of the Mahāsāṃghikas and Mūlasarvāstivādins* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975), pp. 70, 80, 88, and 90.

9 See Jean Przyluski, *Le Concile de Rājagṛha* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1926–1928), pp. 309–14.

10 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, pp. 82–83.

11 Demiéville, pp. 259–60. The italics are mine.

12 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 86.

13 Charles S. Prebish and Janice J. Nattier, "Mahāsāṃghika Origins: The Beginnings of Buddhist Sectarianism," *History of Religions* 16, no. 3 (February 1977): 238–39.

14 See Prebish and Nattier, pp. 250–65, for a full exegesis of the argument.

15 Cousins, pp. 27–60.

16 Thich Thien Chau, "The Literature of the Pudgalavādins," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 7, no. 1 (1984): 7–16, and "Les Réponses des Pudgalavādin aux Critiques des Écoles Bouddhiques," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 10, no. 1 (1987): 33–53.

17 Peter Skilling, "The Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛta-Viniśaya of Daśabalaśrīmitra," *Buddhist Studies Review* 4, no. 1 (1987): 3–23.

18 André Bareau, *Les Sectes bouddhiques du petit véhicule* (Saigon: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1955), pp. 17, 21.

19 James Legge, trans., *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms: Being an Account by the Chinese Monk Fa-lisien of his Travels in India and Ceylon (A.D. 399–414) in Search*

of the Buddhist Books of Discipline (reprint, New York: Paragon, Dover, 1965), p. 98. One may also refer to Fa-hsien's Chinese translation of the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya (*Taishō* 1425, 1426, 1427), carried out with the assistance of Buddhabhadra between 416–418 C.E., where he offers the same conclusion.

20 Cousins (n. 2 above), pp. 33–34.
21 Prebish and Nattier, p. 270.
22 Cousins, p. 48.
23 See Charles S. Prebish, "The Prātimokṣa Puzzle: Fact versus Fantasy," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, no. 2 (April–June 1974): 168–76, and "Vinaya and Prātimokṣa: The Foundation of Buddhist Ethics," *Studies in the History of Buddhism*, ed. A. K. Narain (Delhi: B. R. Publishing, 1980), pp. 223–64.
24 Prebish, "The Prātimokṣa Puzzle," p. 174.
25 John Holt, *Discipline: The Canonical Buddhism of the Vinayapiṭaka* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), pp. 102–3.
26 I. B. Horner, trans., *The Book of the Discipline*, pt. 3 (reprint, London: Luzac, 1957), p. xxviii.
27 Prebish, "Vinaya and Prātimokṣa," p. 251.
28 The Sanskrit text for each of the rules is taken from W. Pachow and Ramakanta Mishra, eds., "The Prātimokṣa Sūtra of the Mahāsāṃghikas," *Journal of the Gaṅgānāth Jhā Research Institute* 10, no. 1 (November 1952); no. 2 (February 1953); no. 3 (May 1953); no. 4 (August 1953), app. 1–48. For another edition of the text, see Nathmal Tatia, ed., *Prātimokṣasūtram of the Lokottaravādi-Mahāsāṅghika School*, Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series, vol. 16 (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1976). The English translations are taken from Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline* (n. 8 above).
29 There is no Buddhist hybrid Sanskrit or Pāli equivalent for *osaktikā*. The nuns' text records the same form, but Gustav Roth offers no explanation in his edition of the text, other than to indicate that it could not be traced in any dictionary. See Gustav Roth, ed., *Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya: Including the Bhikṣuṇī-Prakīrṇaka and a Summary of the Bhikṣu-Prakīrṇaka Ārya-Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin*, Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series, vol. 12 (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1970), pp. 297, 349. The closest parallel is *utsaktikā*, listed in both the Mahāvyutpatti (no. 8542) and Franklin Edgerton's *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, 2 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1953) (although the latter cites the former as its source). It's only possible correspondent in the various Prātimokṣa-sūtras is in that of the *Mūlasarvāstivādin nikāya* (Śaiksa-dharma no. 18).
30 Again, the term *osaktikā* is found in the nuns' text of this *nikāya* and is listed in the Mahāvyutpatti (no. 8608), corresponding to its counterpart in the Mūlasarvāstivādin text (Śaikṣa-dharma no. 86).
31 Edgerton, 1:10, par. 1.73.
32 Gustav Roth, "Bhikṣuṇīvinaya and Bhikṣu-Prakīrṇaka and Notes on the Language," *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* 52, nos. 1–4 (January–December 1966): 38–39.
33 Roth, *Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya*, pp. lv–lxi.
34 The Pāli text is adapted from the Venerable Ñāṇamoli Thera, ed. and trans., *The Pātimokkha: 227 Fundamental Rules of a Bhikkhu* (Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand, 1966). The translations are mine.
35 Holt, pp. 102–3.
36 Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, p. 94.
37 Ibid.
38 Here one should refer to the Sanskrit and Chinese texts of the Sarvāstivādin *nikāya*, the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the Mūlasarvāstivādin text, the Dharmaguptaka,

Mahīśāsaka, and Kāśyapīya texts preserved in Chinese, as well as the Chinese version of the Upālipariprcchā-sūtra (*Taishō* 1466), and the Mahāvyutpatti.

39 This text appears in Valentina Stache-Rosen, trans., *Upālipariprcchāsūtra: Ein Text zur buddhistischen Ordendisziplin*, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen no. 140 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984).

40 See Akira Hirakawa, "The Rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Its Relationship to the Worship of Stūpas," *Memoirs of the Toyo Bunkyo Research Department* 22 (1963): 57–106; Gregory Schopen, "The Phrase 'sa pṛthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet' in the Vajracchedikā: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 17 (1975): 147–81, "Mahāyāna in Indian Inscriptions," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 21 (1979): 1–19, and "Two Problems in the History of Indian Buddhism: The Layman/Monk Distinction and the Doctrines of the Transference of Merit," *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 10 (1985): 9–47; and Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 20–33.

41 For a full description of the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, see Charles S. Prebish, *A Survey of Vinaya Literature*, Dharma Lamp Series, vol. 1 (Taipei: Jin Luen Publishing House, 1994), pp. 70–76.

28

MAHĀSĀṂGHIKA ORIGINS

The beginnings of Buddhist sectarianism

Jan Nattier and Charles S. Prebish

Source: *History of Religions* 16, 3 (1977): 237–72.

1. Introduction

During the past thirty years, there has been a considerable interest on the part of scholars writing on Buddhism in the early Indian Buddhist councils in general and the Buddhist sectarian movement in particular.[1] Prior to that time, it was generally accepted as traditional in Buddhology that the great schism separating the Mahāsāṃghika and Sthavira nikāyas of early Indian Buddhism occurred at the famous council held at Vaiśālī in 100 A.N. (after nirvāṇa), and that the issue of separation was the famous *daśa-vastūni* (ten points) of illicit monastic behavior. Of course other scholars had by this time recognized the importance of Mahādeva's innocuous five theses regarding the status of the arhant for the sectarian movement, but no real resolution of the problem presented itself. Hofinger's well known *Etude sur la concile de Vaiśālī*, published in 1946, demonstrated quite clearly that, in fact, the notorious schism had nothing at all to do with the Vaiśālī council. Nowhere, in any of the Vinaya council accounts that Hofinger presents so meticulously, is such a schism mentioned. Rather, perfect concord was seemingly reestablished. It was not until 1955 that we were presented with a reasonable solution to the problem, included as one of the major theses of André Bareau's *Les Premiers Conciles bouddhiques*. We should note, however, that a similar thesis was hinted at but not developed by Pachow in 1951.[2] Bareau maintains that yet another council, held in Pāṭaliputra under the Nandin ruler Mahāpadma, convened in 137 A.N., resulting in the great schism and precipitated by the above mentioned Mahādeva's five theses. Bareau's hypothesis was arrived at through the very careful and thorough study of all the source materials, as we have come to expect from this great scholar's work, and his proved itself to be a very persuasive one, gaining further acceptance among scholars as each year passes.

It was in this context that one of the writers of this article, in seeking to summarize the results of this vast amount of research, especially since the majority

of it has been written in French, presented "A Review of Scholarship on the Buddhist Councils,"[3] accepting (after much checking as well as independent research) the tenets of Bareau and Hofinger. Nevertheless, as is often the case in the study of early Indian Buddhism, our hypotheses and tentative conclusions need to be constantly reevaluated. The following pages are presented as a reevaluation of the sectarian issue, and present several new interpretations of the traditional materials. We maintain the following positions in this regard. First, that Mahādeva has nothing to do with the primary schism between the Mahāsāṃghikas and Sthaviras, emerging in a historical period considerably later than previously supposed, and taking his place in the sectarian movement by instigating an internal schism within the already existing Mahāsāṃghika school. Second, that the sole cause of the initial schism in Buddhist history pertained to matters of Vinaya, but rather than representing a reaction of orthodox Buddhists to Mahāsāṃghika laxity, as maintained by both Bareau and Demiéville,[4] represents a reaction on the part of the future Mahāsāṃghikas to unwarranted expansion of the root Vinaya text on the part of the future Sthaviras (who, in so doing, ultimately provoked the schism they were so diligently seeking to avert). Finally, that the date proposed by Bareau for the schism (137 A.N.) is arrived at in less than certain terms, and that 116 A.N. is a significantly more reasonable date to maintain.

Traditional accounts give a wide variety of reasons for the schism which separated the Mahāsāṃghikas from the Sthaviras. In summary, they are the following:

1. *Dīpavaṃsa* (Theravādin): The schism was provoked by the ten "lax practices" (*dasa-vatthūni*) of a group called the Vajjiputtaka monks, who are in this source identified with the future Mahāsāṃghikas. In reaction to their condemnation at the Vaiśālī council by the rest of the Buddhist community, these monks held a "countercouncil" and established the Mahāsāṃghika sect.

2. *Samayabhedoparacanacakra* of Vasumitra (Sarvāstivādin): The schism was instigated by a monk named Mahādeva who propounded five heretical theses. The dissent over these points resulted in a division between the Mahāsāṃghikas, who accepted them, and the Sthaviras, who did not.

3. *Nikāyabhedavibhaṅgavyākhyāna* of Bhavya (includes the traditions of three different schools): (*a*) *Sthavira tradition* (according to Tāranātha, but Bareau considers this to be of Kashmiri Sarvāstivādin origin):[5] The schism was due to "various points of controversy," which are not specified in this account. (*b*) *Mahāsāṃghika tradition*: This account merely lists the eighteen schools according to their sectarian affiliations and does not give reasons for any of the divisions. (*c*) *Saṃmitīya tradition*: The schism resulted from the activities of a monk named Bhadra (or "a good monk") who demonstrated magical powers and advocated the five heretical theses.

4. *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra* (Sarvāstivādin): The schism was brought about by Mahādeva, a merchant's son, who committed several heinous crimes and afterwards joined the Buddhist monastic order in hopes of eradicating his

sins. As a monk, he propounded the five heretical theses, which provoked a schism between the Mahāsāṃghikas, who accepted his views, and the Sarvāstivādins (not the Sthaviras, as in the other sources), who did not.

5. *San louen hiuan yi* of Ki-tsang (based on the earlier work of Paramārtha, which has survived only in fragments; a Mahāyāna commentary on Vasumitra's *Samayabhedoparacanacakra*): The division between the Mahāsāṃghikas and the Sthāvirīyas was the result of the activities of a certain Mahādeva who, in addition to advocating the heretical five points, tried to incorporate Mahāyāna sūtras into the Tripiṭaka.

6. *Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra* (Mahāsāṃghika): The schism resulted from the objection of the future Mahāsāṃghikas to an attempt by the future Sthaviras to increase the number of Vinaya rules. The majority of the saṃgha, preferring to maintain the old version, called themselves Mahāsāṃghikas, while those who chose the version containing the additional rules took the name Sthaviras.

In addition to these, there are a number of other sources, such as Vinītadeva's *Samayabhedoparacanacakranikāyabhedopadarśanasaṃgraha*, the *Mañjuśrīparipṛcchā-sūtra*; I-tsing's list of sects (extant only in an incomplete form), the *San louen yi Kiuan*, and the *Varṣāgrapṛcchā-sūtra*,[6] which contain descriptions of the Mahāsāṃghikas and their subsects. They do not, however, include any discussion of the reasons for the original schism, so they will not be dealt with here.

In summary, then, we have two sources which attribute the split to differences over disciplinary matters, while the remaining sources blame the schism on doctrinal controversies which are generally, though not always, associated with a monk named Mahādeva.

The difficulty of reconciling these divergent accounts has been quite evident to Western scholars. A provisional compromise, suggested by Demiéville,[7] would consider the doctrinal stance of the Mahāsāṃghikas (i.e., their acceptance of the five theses) a reflection of their disciplinary laxity. The reason for the differences in these accounts, according to Demiéville, is that they are the outgrowth of two distinct oral traditions: that of the *Vinaya-dhāras* on the one hand, and of the *Dharma-dhāras* on the other. The former would naturally, in recounting the causes of the schism, emphasize matters pertaining to the monastic discipline, while the latter would be more concerned with doctrinal problems. Thus the various accounts of the schism represent a single event, viewed from two different perspectives. The appeal of this theory is obvious, as it would reconcile the accounts of all the sources cited above. There are, however, some serious problems with Demiéville's hypothesis. If his distinction between the *Vinaya-dhāra* and *Dharma-dhāra* lines of transmission is correct, then we should expect to find only the Vinaya sources relating disciplinary disputes as the cause of the schism, and the Dharma sources presenting doctrinal differences as the cause. On the contrary, however, we find that the *Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra*, which is an Abhidharma work of the Mahāsāṃghikas, and therefore, presumably, to be counted as a Dharma source, claims that disputes over the

Vinaya were responsible for the schism. In fact, rather than finding a distinction between Vinaya and Dharma literature on this point, we find that the breakdown is according to sectarian affiliation: the Theravādin and Mahāsāṃghika sources cite the Vinaya as the source of the schism, while the Sarvāstivādin works (as well as Paramārtha, a Mahāyānist whose work is based on the Sarvāstivādin tradition of Vasumitra) all attribute the schism to matters of doctrine. This in itself raises some doubt as to the validity of Demiéville's theory. In light of this, we should consider individually whether either the Vinaya of the Mahāsāṃghikas, or their doctrine, particularly as represented in the five points of Mahādeva, do in fact reflect laxity. Before continuing this line of inquiry, however, we must first examine in detail the nature of each of our sources and determine to what extent, if any, they may be considered accurate accounts of the causes of the Mahāsāṃghika-Sthavira schism.

Theravādin sources

The fifth chapter of the Pāli *Dīpavaṃsa* records the events of the schism separating the Mahāsāṃghikas and Sthaviras. The predominant cause of this schism is cited to be the famous *dasavatthūni* of the council of Vaiśālī. This account has prompted Geiger, at least, to remark, "It is historically confirmed, I think, that the first schism in the Church proceeded from Vesālī and that the dasa vatthūni of the Vajji-monks brought it about."[8] In spite of the fact that Bareau maintains that the council was convened solely on the issue of the tenth point, that of accepting gold and silver, and that the other nine points represent later Sthavira accretions,[9] it would serve us well to examine the ten points in their entirety in hopes of determining whether the supposition that the Mahāsāṃghikas demonstrated laxity in their observance has validity. Now to some extent Bareau has already done this,[10] concluding not only that the Mahāsāṃghikas condemn accepting gold and silver but that, "If they do not speak of the nine other practices, this is not because they approve of them, since they implicitly condemn them elsewhere."[11] Nevertheless, Bareau was working with the Chinese version of the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya as recorded in *Taishō* 1425, and this version might be stated to be somewhat later than the Sanskrit original. Fortunately, however, we now have both a Sanskrit text of the Bhikṣu *Prātimokṣa-sūtra* and its translation,[12] and perhaps these two studies bring us closer to a resolution of this problem. Since the Pāli and Mahāsāṃghika Vinayas seem to hold the key to the establishment or disproval of the hypothesis set forth in the *Dīpavaṃsa*, we can easily compare them on each of the points of individual behavior.

The first point in the Pāli list refers to the inhibition of preserving salt in a horn (*siṅgiloṇakappa*), and has as its reference Pācittiya offense 38. This rule makes it an offence for monks to eat food which has been stored.[13] The Mahāsāṃghika Prātimokṣa correspondent is found in Pācattika rule 37 and reads, "In eating [food] that has been laid aside [as a store], there is a pācattika."[14] Here we find no disagreement whatsoever.

The second point in the Pāli list refers to taking food when the shadow is beyond two fingers wide (*dvaṅgulakappa*), and has as its reference Pācittiya offense 37. This rule makes it an offense for monks to eat at the wrong time.[15] The Mahāsāṃghika counter-part is found in Pācattika 36 and states, "In eating at the wrong time, there is a pācattika."[16] Again we have concord.

The third point in the Pāli list refers to finishing a meal and then going to another village for another meal (*gāmantarakappa*), and has as its reference Pācittiya offense 35. This rule makes it an offense for monks, after finishing a meal, to partake of more food that is not left over.[17] The Mahāsāṃghika counter-part is found in Pācattika 33 and reads, "Whatever monk who has eaten what is offered and risen from his seat, should chew or consume hard food or soft food that has not been left over, that is a pācattika."[18] Here once again we have agreement.

The seventh point in the Pāli list refers to drinking unchurned milk, which is somewhere between the states of milk and curd, after having eaten (*amathi-takappa*), and has as its reference Pācittiya offense 35. We have already seen the parallel for this point above, resulting in no disagreement. It is also worth noting that Mahāsāṃghika Pācattika offenses 36 (eating at the wrong time) and 39 (prohibiting special foods, except for ill monks) also apply here, and these correspond to Pāli Pācittiyas 37 and 39, respectively.

The eighth point in the Pāli list refers to drinking unfermented wine (*jalogim*), and has as its reference Pācittiya offense 51. This rule makes it an offense for monks to take intoxicating drinks.[19] The corresponding Mahāsāṃghika rule is found in Pācattika 76 and states, "In drinking intoxicating beverages, spirits, and liquors, there is a pācattika."[20] Here we have perfect agreement.

The ninth point in the Pāli list refers to using a mat without a border (*adasakaṃ nisīdanam*), and has as its reference Pācittiya offense 89. This rule cites the dimensions for new rugs, noting that the border should measure one Sugata-span.[21] The Mahāsāṃghika counterpart is found in Pācattika 86 and notes, with regard to new rug measurements, "This is the measure here: in length, two spans of the Sugata-span; in width, one and one half; the border a span."[22] In the Mahāsāṃghika text, Niḥsargika-Pācattika 15 makes it clear that this one-span border is to be taken from the monk's old rug as a means of disfig-urement, and of course this corresponds to Pāli rule 15 of the same section as well.

The tenth point in the Pāli list refers to accepting gold and silver (*jatarūpara-jatam*), and has as its reference Nissaggiya-Pācittiya 18. This rule makes it an offense for monks to receive gold or silver, or for having another act as his agent, or to have such money deposited for him.[23] The Mahāsāṃghika counter-part is found in Niḥsargika-Pācattika 18 and states, "Whatever monk should, with his own hand, acquire gold or silver, or should have [another] acquire it [for him], even so much as to say: 'Deposit it here,' or should consent to having it deposited, that is a niḥsargikapācattika."[24] We can see that on this last point,

too, the texts are in perfect agreement. In addition, another rule in this section makes its clear that monks are forbidden even to accept robe prices sent to the monk by lay persons (rule 10 in each version).

Bareau, in pointing out the particularities peculiar to each of the early sects, notes three further variations on points of individual conduct. These include: (1) taking meals in separate groups, (2) digging the earth with one's hands, and (3) multiple rounds of eating.[25] We can state that even these are condemned in the Sanskrit Mahāsāṃghika text by Pācattika rules 40, 73, and 33, respectively.[26]

Of the ten points in the Pāli tradition, three deal with collective saṃgha behavior. The fourth point involves holding several Uposathas within the same *sīmā* (*āvāsakappa*). The fifth point in the Pāli list forbids monks to confirm an act in an incomplete assembly, later having the absent monks provide their assent (*ānumatikappa*). The sixth Pāli point involves carrying out an act improperly, citing habitual practice as an authority (*āciṇṇakappa*). For Mahāsāṃghika agreement on the condemnation of these points we must defer to the Chinese texts, as no Sanskrit counterpart for the Skandhaka portion of the Vinaya seems to be extant. There is a summary of the *Bhikṣu-Prakīrṇaka* (which is the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin counterpart of the vastus comprising the Skandhaka of the various other Vinayas) extant,[27] but it affords little help.

Having now carefully surveyed, on a point by point basis, the points listed in the Pāli account of the council held at Vaiśālī, as presented in the twelfth chapter of the Cullavagga of the Vinaya Piṭaka, in comparison with the Mahāsāṃghika statements on these points, we must conclude that there is nothing less than complete and absolute concord. Thus, when Demiéville states, "Thus, even on the single point of discipline which the Mahāsāṃghikas make mention of in their recitation of the council of Vaiśālī, their Vinaya appears infinitely more laxist than the Pāli Vinaya,"[28] his conclusion seems to be unfounded. Demiéville appears to base his conclusion of disciplinary laxity on the extended account of the gold and silver issue in the Pāli Vinaya, and the complexity of its restrictions, as contrasted with the brevity exemplified by the Mahāsāṃghika text. Now it has long been accepted by scholars such as Bareau, Pachow, Hofinger, Frauwallner, and Roth,[29] that the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya is very likely to be the most ancient stratum of Vinaya literature. Consequently, its brevity may well be attributable to its high antiquity rather than simply laxity. It is certainly not logical to assume brevity equals disciplinary laxity. In summary, then, we must restate our position that, with regard to the ten points of the Vaiśālī council, the Mahāsāṃghikas posit a condemnation equal to that of the Pāli sources, and our agreement with Bareau when he notes, "The nine practices of the monks of Vaiśālī could not have been one of the causes of the schism which separated the Mahāsāṃghikas from the Sthaviras as the Sinhalese chronicles maintain and, in their course, certain historians of Buddhism."[30]

In light of the work cited by Hofinger[31] and Bareau, and the new input that comes to the forefront with the addition of new Sanskritic materials, it is clearly established that the Mahāsāṃghikas cannot be identified with the Vṛjiputraka

bhikṣus of Vaiśālī. Their condemnation of all the ten practices is simply too severe and uniform in all the sources consulted.

As Gustav Roth wryly remarks on the issue of the schism, "And why are the Mahāsāṃghika not mentioned in the Mā-Vin [Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya] report of this council when they already existed at the time?"[32] It is clear that he dates the actual splitting up somewhat later than the *Dīpavaṃsa* does.[33] Thus, of all the Pāli sources, it is only the *Dīpavaṃsa* that makes mention of the Mahāsāṃghikas (by name) issuing forth from the council of Vaiśālī. In addition to the fact that we have shown above that its thesis for the schism is unfounded, its supposition is even rejected by later Pāli texts. As Lamotte remarks, "The portion relating to the Mahāsāṃghikas has been eliminated from the chronicles by the editors of the *Mahāvaṃsa* and the *Samantapāsādikā* and, as we shall see, has been replaced by an entirely different document in the Nikāyasaṃgraha."[34]

Sarvāstivādin sources

In contrast to the Theravādin *Dīpavaṃsa* account, all the Sarvāstivādin works relate the schism to controversies over doctrinal issues. In this category we include four of the texts mentioned above: (1) the *Samayabhedoparacanacakra* of Vasumitra, (2) the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣā-śāstra*, (3) the first tradition recorded in Bhavya's *Nikāyabhedavibhaṅgavyākhyāna*, and (4) the *San louen hiuan yi* of Ki-tsang (based on an earlier work by Paramārtha, which is in turn a commentary on Vasumitra's text). Of these, the first two are of undoubted Sarvāstivādin origin. The third, considered by Tāranātha to be a Sthavira tradition, has been shown by Bareau to be, instead, a Kashmiri Sarvāstivādin work.[35] The fourth, a text of Mahāyāna (specifically Vijñānavādin) authorship, is not in the strictest sense a Sarvāstivādin work; but since it is a commentatorial work which is ultimately based on Vasumitra's *Samayabhedoparacanacakra*, it is directly connected to the Sarvāstivādin traditions concerning the schism, and for that reason it has been included here.

The treatise of Vasumitra is one of the earliest of the extant sources dealing with the so-called eighteen schools.[36] In Bareau's classification of these sources into three chronologically arranged groups, Vasumitra's text falls into the earliest category.[37] It is thus one of the more ancient of the available sources on the issue of early Buddhist sectarianism. Further, as Bareau demonstrates, it is directly related to the *Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra*,[38] which is a Mahāsāṃghika source, a fact which may well add to Vasumitra's credibility, since he was in some contact with the writings of the sect whose schism he is discussing.

The reason for the schism, according to Vasumitra, was the list of five theses, propounded by a monk named Mahādeva.[39] These theses, which deal mainly with the nature and attainments of the arhant, were accepted by the Mahāsāṃghikas; those who rejected them called themselves the Sthaviras. The controversy, then, was a doctrinal one, centering not on the proper conduct of monks, but on the level of attainment which may legitimately be ascribed to the arhant.

A similar account, but a far more elaborate one, is given in the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣā-śāstra*.[40] Here the activities of Mahādeva are related at great length, and a story is told of how each of the five points came to be propounded. The basic point, however, is the same as in Vasumitra's treatise: that the doctrines contained in the five theses were the cause of the schism. An interesting divergence in this account, however, is the statement that the Sarvāstivādins, and not the Sthaviras, as in all our other accounts, were the ones who objected to Mahādeva and his Mahāsāṃghika followers.[41] Since this account has been embellished with narrative details not found in our other sources, it should be used with some caution; still, there are no grounds that would warrant ignoring it altogether.

We have, then, two Sarvāstivādin sources which explicitly connect Mahādeva and his five theses with the origin of the Mahāsāṃghika sect. Our third source, the first list in Bhavya's *Nikāyabhedavibhaṅgavyākhyāna*,[42] is far less informative: it merely states that the schism resulted from "various points of controversy."[43] This can hardly be counted as evidence for any hypothesis. The most that can be said here is that this text supports a plurality of causes for the schism.

Finally, we have the account contained in Ki-tsang's *San louen hiuan yi*.[44] Being a Mahāyāna work, this text contains many Mahāyānist amplifications of the originally Sarvāstivādin tradition: the schism is said to result from the activities of Mahādeva, but in Ki-tsang's account he is credited not only with having preached the five theses, but also with having to introduce Mahāyāna sūtras into the Buddhist canon.[45] This source is particularly revealing, in that its author considers the Mahāsāṃghikas to be the ancestors of the Mahāyāna and is therefore concerned to present that sect in as favorable a light as possible. Consequently, we may consider their account of Mahādeva, which would seem to run directly counter to their own purposes by presenting him in a rather unfavorable light, to be a highly authoritative source. Certainly it does not provide conclusive evidence of the nature of the historical events surrounding the origins of the Mahāsāṃghikas. What it does tell us, though, is that Paramārtha (and Ki-tsang) knew of a tradition connecting Mahādeva with the origins of the Mahāsāṃghikas which was too well established to disregard, even though it describes the ancestors of the Mahāyāna in a highly uncomplimentary fashion. This text, then, although admittedly late and strongly colored with Mahāyānist additions, offers significant evidence in corroboration of the Mahādeva traditions found in our other Sarvāstivādin-based sources.

Saṃmitīya sources

Another text which attributes the Mahāsāṃghika-Sthavira schism to controversies of doctrine is the third list in Bhavya's *Nikāyabhedavibhaṅgavyākhyāna*, which Tāranātha considers to be a Saṃmitīya tradition.[46] Bareau ascribes this source to the first of his three chronological periods, thus including it among the earliest works on the Buddhist sectarian divisions.[47]

This account harmonizes fairly well with the Sarvāstivādin traditions about Mahādeva, though here the name does not appear. According to the Saṃmitīya tradition, the schism is provoked by Māra himself, who transforms himself into a man described as "bhadra" (good) or, as Bareau translates, "possessing all the [good] qualities."[48] Taking on the robes of a monk, Māra teaches various supernatural powers (*ṛddhi*), and with his teaching of the five propositions, creates great dissension in the Buddhist community. As a result, the saṃgha is divided into the sects of the Sthaviras and the Mahāsāṃghikas. This account adds some details not found in the Sarvāstivādin sources, supplying for instance, the names of two monks, Nāga and Sthiramati, who accepted and praised the five points. It also differs in the date given for the schism, placing it at 137 A.N., as opposed to 116 A.N. in the Sarvāstivādin works. These divergences clearly demonstrate its separate lineage, which is to be expected since it belongs to the tradition of another sect. This Saṃmitīya account, then, provides a source belonging to a group other than the Sarvāstivādins, and which differs from their traditions in some details, but gives the same basic reason for the schism: the activities of a certain monk who propounded the five heretical theses.

Mahāsāṃghika sources

In our search for the origins of the Mahāsāṃghika-Sthavira schism, the sources belonging to the Mahāsāṃghikas themselves are of unique value. While it would be unreasonable to assume their inherent validity simply on the basis of their being Mahāsāṃghika works (a writer could certainly color his account in an attempt to make his own sect look as legitimate as possible), they are still in a favored position as sources produced by those who were immediately involved in the conflict. One would expect that a controversy important enough to bring about a schism would not be easily forgotten, and that the Mahāsāṃghikas, above all, would have been likely to preserve the memory of its causes.

Unfortunately, one of our two Mahāsāṃghika sources does not discuss the causes of the schism at all: the second list in Bhavya's *Nikāyabhedavibhaṅgavyālchyāna*, which is considered a Mahāsāṃghika tradition by Tāranātha and accepted as such by Bareau,[49] gives only a list of the sectarian divisions and provides no account of their causes. This is a useful source for determining the relations of the various Mahāsāṃghika subsects to each other, but is of no help in our search for the origins of the sect as a whole.

Fortunately, however, there is another source which is of Mahāsāṃghika origin and which clearly states the reasons for the Mahāsāṃghika-Sthavira split: the *Śāriputraparipṛcch-asūtra*, an Abhidharma work of the Mahāsāṃghikas, which claims that the schism was the result of a Vinaya dispute. Here we find an entirely different tradition from those which we have just seen in the Sarvāstivādin and Saṃmitīya sources: the controversy, according to the *Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra*, had nothing to do with doctrinal matters at all. No mention is made either of Mahādeva or of the notorious five points. According

to this source, the dispute was limited to disagreements about the number of rules which should be followed by Buddhist monks.

Chronologically, this is one of the most valuable of our sources, for according to Bareau, it is the earliest of all the treatises on the sects.[50] This work, then, has considerable validity, and will merit further examination.

II. Non-Mahāsāṃghika sources: the Mahādeva controversy

We have seen that, with the exception of the Pāli sources, whose account of the Mahāsāṃghika-Sthavira schism is based on a confusion of the Mahāsāṃghikas with the Vṛjiputraka monks, all of the sources listed above are of considerable validity. Since both the Sarvāstivādin and the Saṃmitīya sources find the source of the schism in the five points propounded by a monk who is sometimes (in the Sarvāstivādin sources) referred to by the name of Mahādeva, we may consider these sources as a whole, and return later to our sole Mahāsāṃghika source, the *Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra*.

One of the first issues which claims our attention is that of disciplinary laxity among the Mahāsāṃghikas (the monastic aspect of which has already been discussed in the section on Pāli sources). As already mentioned above, Demiéville has attempted to reconcile the conflicts between the various sources on the schism by claiming that the five points of Mahādeva are a reflection of Mahāsāṃghika laxity. Bareau takes a similar approach, as will be discussed below. If the five points could be shown to be a genuine indication of such laxity, this would offer strong cause for accepting all the sources (except, of course, the Pāli) as valid, since they could be taken as accounts of a single event seen from different perspectives (as Demiéville claims) or, as Bareau would have it, as accounts of a multiplicity of causes which may be easily harmonized with each other. If this is not a legitimate claim, however, then the issue calls for further clarification, and a decision will have to be made as to which of the sources correctly reflect the real reasons for the schism and which do not.

The meaning of the five points themselves has been the object of some controversy. Before dealing with the issue of their relation to disciplinary laxity, we must first determine, as accurately as is possible, what the original intent of the five points really was.

The five points

Point 1

Vasumitra: "Arhants are tempted by others";[51]
Mahāvibhāṣā: "enticement by others";[52]
Bhavya: (Mahāsāṃghika)—"one gives to another in return,"[53] (Ekavyāvahārika)—"even Arhants attain the teaching thanks to others";[54]

Vinītadeva: "there is no knowledge by oneself";[55]
Paramārtha: "the clothing [is] soiled by another";[56]
Kathāvatthu: "that an Arahant has impure discharge" (section title: "Of conveyance by another").[57]

There can be little doubt that the subject of the first point was whether or not an Arhant could still have nocturnal emissions. The first point of Mahādeva's five theses was interpreted in this sense by sources as widely separated by geography and sectarian affiliation as the *Kathāvatthu*, a Pāli Theravādin work, and the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, a Sarvāstivādin work originating in Kashmir. In the *Kathāvatthu* this is made the subject of the first point itself, while the *Mahāvibhāṣā* explains its cryptic statement that the Arhant is subject to "enticement by others" by stating that the occasion for the enunciation of this point was the discovery by a disciple that Mahādeva, who claimed to be an arhant, sometimes had nocturnal emissions. Paramārtha likewise explains that the point at issue is whether or not an Arhant is subject to temptation by "the women of Māra."

The statement of Vinītadeva that "there is no knowledge by oneself" (which Bareau obtains by emending the *ra rig-pa yin-no* of the Tibetan text to *ra rig-pa ma yin-no*, thus changing the meaning from positive to negative) is difficult to explain and seems clearly at variance from the other sources. Likewise, Bhavya's quotation of the first point of the Ekavyāvahārikas, which states that the Arhant attains the teaching thanks to others, is significantly different, though one can discern an underlying similarity in structure: the Arhant receives something through another, though in this case it is the teaching rather than temptation or enticement. Bhavya's first (Mahāsāṃghika) version, which Bareau translates "one gives to another in return," is another variant; the Tibetan *gžan-la lan gdab-pa* means literally "(one) gives back to another," or "(one) replies to another," neither of which can be assimilated to the structure mentioned above.

Even though the divergent texts are difficult to explain, we are still justified, on the weight of the evidence given in the *Mahāvibhāṣā* and the *Kathāvatthu*, and confirmed by Paramārtha, in concluding that the original issue was whether or not an Arhant could have nocturnal emissions. It would appear that at least Vasumitra, and perhaps some of the other texts as well, are also pointing, albeit in a rather obscure fashion, to the same issue.

Point 2

Vasumitra: "(they) have still ignorance";
Mahāvibhāṣā: "ignorance";
Bhavya: (Mahāsāṃghika)—"ignorance," (Ekavyāvahārika)—"even Arhants have ignorance";
Vinītadeva: "even among Arhants there is ignorance" (his point 3; in this versions points 2 and 3 are reversed);

Paramārtha: "unknowingness";
Kathāvatthu: "that the Arahant may lack knowledge."

Here the agreement among our sources is complete. It is not immediately clear, however, just what kind of ignorance is meant. The *Mahāvibhāṣā* distinguishes ignorance which is defiling from that which is not, and claims that (according to Mahādeva) the Arhant is still subject to ignorance of the second type, though not of the first. According to the *Kathāvatthu*, those who accepted the five points did not claim that the Arhant was ignorant with respect to religious matters (i.e., the path, the firuit, the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṃgha, etc.), but only that they could be said to be ignorant with respect to worldly matters: "the name and lineage of a woman or a man, of a right or wrong road, or of how grasses, twigs, and forest plants are called."[58] Paramārtha, following a line similar to that of both of these texts, states that the Arhant is no longer subject to the type of ignorance that causes birth in the three *dhātus* (i.e., defiling ignorance), but he is nevertheless subject to "the unknowingness which is a residue (*vāsanā*) of nonknowledge (*wou-tche: ajñāna*)."

In summary, then, those sources which offer any commentary at all on this point all agree that according to Mahādeva the Arhant is not subject to defiling ignorance—that is, ignorance which causes one to remain in saṃsāra (which would be impossible, since the Arhant is by definition not subject to further rebirth)—but only to ignorance of everyday, worldly matters. This claim was rejected by the opponents of the Mahāsāṃghikas, who felt that the two types of ignorance were inseparable: to claim one was to allow for the other as well, and to allow that the Arhant might be ignorant in matters of religion would be to undercut the essential value of that state.

Point 3

Vasumitra: "(they) have still doubt";
Mahāvibhāṣā: "hesitation";
Bhavya: (Mahāsāṃghika)—"doubt," (Ekavyāvahārika)—"even Arhants have doubts";
Vinītadeva: "even among Arhants there is doubt" (his point 2);
Paramārtha: "doubt";
Kathāvatthu: "that an Arahant may have doubts."

This point is closely related to the preceding one, and again the agreement between our sources is almost exact, with the exception of the substitution of "hesitation" for "doubt" in the account of the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (which, however, returns to the word "doubt" in its narrative discussion of the meaning of this point). As it does with respect to ignorance, the *Mahāvibhāṣā* has Mahādeva distinguish between two different kinds of doubt: "that of muddle-headedness" and that which "derives from mistakes in judgement."[59] Of these two, the Arhant has

eliminated the first type, but is still subject to the second. The *Kathāvatthu*, in similar fashion, follows its own argument against the possibility of an Arhant being ignorant, merely substituting the word "doubt" for "lack of knowledge," and "perplexity" for "ignorance." Paramārtha, finally, states that according to Mahādeva the Arhant would not be subject to doubts with respect to the three doors to deliverance (*vimokṣamukha*), but could still have doubts "with regard to exterior things."[60] The argument, then, is of the same order as that used in the second point: according to Mahādeva and the Mahāsāṃghikas, the Arhant is fully prefected in spiritual matters, but is still subject to doubts in matters of everyday life.

Point 4

Vasumitra: "enlightenment through the other";
Mahāvibhāṣā: "initiation by another";
Bhavya: (Mahāsāṃghika)—"perfect knowledge," (Ekavyāvahārika)—"even Arhants have perfect knowledge";
Vinītadeva: "even among Arhants one must explain the words of another in order to (attain) the fruit";
Paramārtha: "salvation by another";
Kathāvatthu: "that the Arahant is led across by others."[61]

Here the emphasis is on the fact that the Arhant relies on others for assistance, rather than depending exclusively upon himself. Only Bhavya diverges widely from this issue, stating that the Arhant has *yoṅs-su brtags-pa*, "perfect knowledge, perfect understanding." Bareau points out, however, that the Peking version of this text has *btags-pa* in place of *brtags-pa*, a form which could possibly be rendered as "adherence, reliance." This would bring the meaning of the text into line with the other sources, again referring to the Arhant's dependence upon others.

Among the texts which supply a commentary to this point, the *Mahāvibhāṣā* gives the interpretation that the Arhant may be unaware of his own wisdom or supernatural power, and therefore he needs to be initated by others into the realization of that which he already possesses. Paramārtha follows the same line of reasoning, explaining that "salvation by another" means that "the people of dull faculties (*mṛdvindriya*), obtaining the initial fruit, do not know by themselves that they have attained it; they explain that the characteristic of the initial fruit is to be exempt from doubt with regard to the three Jewels and the four Truths. . . ."[62] The *Kathāvatthu*, on the other hand, takes a more general approach dealing with the need for assistance in general, rather than referring specifically to the problem of recognizing whether or not one has "obtained the fruit." Vinītadeva's expanded version of the fourth point, stating that "For [an Arhant to obtain] the fruit, another must explain the words," gives further emphasis to the issue of being able to recognize when one has obtained the fruit.

Given the abbreviated nature of many of our sources, and the relative lateness of those which provide commentaries on this point, it is difficult to determine exactly what the fourth point originally meant. If the *Kathāvatthu* agreed more closely with our northern sources, it would be possible to draw a more specific conclusion; since it does not, however, we can only state generally that the fourth point refers to the necessity for the Arhant to rely, at least in some circumstances, on others. This is clearly a statement that the Arhant is not self-sufficient, and (in some sources) not all-knowing, a position which is clearly confirmed by both points two and three.

Point 5

Vasumitra: "the path is accompanied by emission of voice";[63]
Mahāvibhāṣā: "the way is manifested because one shouts";
Bhavya: (Mahāsāṃghika)—"the way (*mārga*) is salvation by oneself," (Ekavyāvahārika)—"the Way (*mārga*) is nothing but the abandonment of suffering (*duḥkhaparihāna*)";
Vinītadeva: "by saying: 'Suffering!' (*duḥkha*), because one pronounces the word 'suffering,' one produces the Way (*mārga*)";
Paramārtha: "the holy Way manifested by the word";
Kathāvatthu: "that there is articulate utterance on the part of one who has entered into Jhāna."

On this point, most of our sources seem clear: the issue is that the Mahāsāṃghikas claim that some type of exclamation of words is related to, or produces, the Path. Bhavya seems clearly divergent here. Neither his statement that "the Path is salvation by oneself" (Mahāsāṃghika version) nor his second version of this point, attributed to the Ekavyāvahārikas, that "the Path is nothing but the abandonment of suffering," seems at all close to the statements of our others sources.[64] We will, therefore, concentrate our attention on the remaining sources, which seem at least to be dealing with a common issue.

The *Mahāvibhāṣā* explains the meaning of this point by attributing to Mahādeva the following statement: "In speaking of the holy way, if one is not utterly sincere in the anguish with which he heralds it, it will never become manifest at that moment when one's life reaches its end."[65] The shout, in this case, is "Oh, how painful it is!" The emphasis here is on the cry of pain (*duḥkha*) and the importance of the full experience of this suffering.

In Paramārtha, on the other hand, there is no mention of *duḥkha* at all. Here, the fifth point is interpreted to mean that when one obtains the holy Path, this is sometimes manifested by words, "as it happened to Śāriputra, who obtained the initial fruit at the very moment when he was reciting a stanza orally."[66] Only the fact of some verbal expression seems important here, and not the content of the expression.

The *Kathāvatthu* goes one step farther in its discussion of the importance of

words, saying that the point at issue is only whether or not one produces utterances while in the *jhāna* states. Specifically, this text says to its opponents: "You affirm that, knowing the fact of Ill, he utters the word 'Sorrow,' yet you deny that, knowing the fact of Cause [of Ill], he utters the word 'Cause.' Why?" (2. 5. 4.). The *Kathāvatthu* goes on to ask why one does not utter the words "cessation" and "path" as he recognizes the third and fourth noble truths, respectively.

Here, then, the point again seems to be not the utterance of sounds in general, but the utterance of the specific word "sorrow" (*duḥkha*). This is further confirmed by a sixth point presented in this section of the *Kathāvatthu* which is in all probability a variant of the fifth: "That induction [of insight] by the word 'sorrow!' is a factor of and included in the Path."

Vinītadeva, too, agrees, that the point at issue is the Mahāsāṃghika claim that one "produces the path" by uttering the word "sorrow!"

We may summarize, then, by saying that the original point of controversy seems to have been the utterance of the word "sorrow!," which was taken either as a sign that one had entered the Path or as a means of inducing that entrance.

Having clarified the meaning of each of these points, insofar as it is possible to do so, we may now return to our original question: Are these points in fact an indication of laxity on the part of those who advocated them?

An overview of all five points shows clearly that four of them have to do with the nature of the Arhant, while the fifth focuses on the utterance of the word "sorrow!" and its relation to the Path. It is certainly the points dealing with the Arhant, and not the fifth point, which have been the focus of the accusation of Mahāsāṃghika laxity. In what sense, then, could these descriptions of the Arhant be an indication of lax practice?

Certainly the acceptance of these points, taken out of context, would appear to be a sign of laxity, in that their effect is to "demote" the Arhant from the status of near-perfection which had previously been his. If the Arhant is still the goal to be pursued, the net effect would be to lower the level of that goal, thus making it easier to attain. If the Arhant is *not* still the goal, however, then the picture changes radically. If another, higher goal is being advocated, then these points, as demeaning as they might be to the Arhant, cannot be taken as a sign of laxity on the part of those who adopted them. Is there any evidence, then, that the Mahāsāṃghikas were substituting another goal for the old goal of Arhantship? There are at least two such indications. On the one hand, in at least one place Mahādeva is referred to as a Bodhisattva,[67] a title which would certainly indicate an attempt to replace the goal of Arhantship with the Bodhisattva practice, resulting in the eventual attainment of full Buddhahood. Unfortunately, this remark is found in a Mahāyāna-influenced source, which considerably diminishes the value of such an attribution, although it is still worthy of note. There is other evidence, however, that would support this claim. The Mahāsāṃghikas are well known for their claim that Bodhisattvas, as well as Buddhas, are supramundane beings, having capacities far beyond those of ordinary people. For example, Vasumitra lists among the Mahāsāṃghika tenets the

statements that Bodhisattvas do not pass through the usual embryonic stages in their mothers' wombs; that they all assume the form of elephants upon entering their mothers' wombs; that they are not born in the usual fashion, but emerge from the right side of their mothers; and that no Bodhisattva entertains any thoughts of greed, anger, or harm to others.[68] Not all the Mahāsāṃghika sects, however, shared this position. Several, in fact, took the position that Bodhisattvas are only average beings and are not exempt from being born into the lower states of existence (*durgati*).[69] This is a far cry from the supramundane Bodhisattva of the other Mahāsāṃghikas, who is free from all effects of karma, and who is described in such exalted terms that no human being could hope to imitate him. The same schools who held that the Bodhisattva was an average person also subscribed to a second thesis, which adds another perspective on this issue. They claimed that the cult of the *stūpa* (i.e., worship of the relics of the Buddha) did not produce great merit. Could these theses, taken together, indicate a position radically different from that of the other Mahāsāṃghikas—not a cult of worship directed toward a supramundane Buddha, but the beginnings of an attempt to imitate rather than to worship? It may be that we have here the earliest phase of the Bodhisattva practice, made available to ordinary human beings by virtue of the fact that the concept of the Buddha (and of the Bodhisattva, who is by definition a future Buddha) has remained human, rather than undergoing the process of divinization which occurred among some of the Mahāsāṃghikas.

The schools which maintained the concept of the humanized Bodhisattva, and devalued the devotional practices associated with the *stūpa* cult, form a special group within the Mahāsāṃghika sect. Nalinaksha Dutt has labeled them the "southern" or "later" Mahāsāṃghikas since they centered around the area of the Andhaka mountains in south-central India and emerged at a time after the initial formation of the Mahāsāṃghika sect.[70] The "northern" or "earlier" Mahāsāṃghikas, to use Dutt's terminology, centered in northern India, and included the sects of the Lokottaravādins, Ekavyāvahārikas, Gokulikas, and (according to some sources) the Bahuśrutīyas and Prajñaptivādins, that is, the sects who considered Buddhas and Bodisattvas to be supramundane. The sects belonging to the southern group include the Caitra (also called the Cetīyas or Caitikas in other sources), the Matarīyas, the Pūrvaśailas (or Uttaraśailas), the Aparaśailas, the Rājagirīyas, and the Siddhārthikas, as well as (according to some sources) the Bahuśrutīyas and Prajñaptivādins. Though Dutt's northern-southern terminology leaves something to be desired, since the northern schools were not exclusively located in the north of India, it is still a reasonable distinction, and for purposes of convenience it will be adopted here.

In summary, we may conclude that the notions of the Bodhisattva varied widely among the different subsects of the Mahāsāṃghikas, with a highly divinized concept being held by the so-called northern schools, and a much more human description being given by the southern sects. With the limited evidence offered by the early treatises on the sects, it is not possible to decide conclusively whether the southern schools were in fact advocating the goal of

Buddhahood (to be attained by the Bodhisattva practice) as a viable alternative to the Arhant ideal. If this was in fact the case, it is of extreme importance, since as we shall see in the next section, there is a special connection between Mahādeva and the southern Mahāsāṃghikas in the earliest sectarian treatises. Therefore, even if the practice of the Bodhisattva path by at least some of the Mahāsāṃghikas cannot be definitively proven, the possibility should be given due consideration before deciding that Mahādeva was content to accept the goal of becoming (or being) a far less than perfect Arhant. The five points could be interpreted as an expression of Mahāsāṃghika laxity only if it could be conclusively proven that Mahādeva was not, in fact, pursuing the higher goal of Buddhahood. Since at least some of the Mahāsāṃghikas held doctrines which would make that possible, we cannot rule out the possibility that Mahādeva, far from advocating laxity, was urging his followers toward the even more rigorous practice of the Bodhisattva path.

Related to their views on the Bodhisattva is yet another important thesis of the southern Mahāsāṃghika schools: the Arhant, according to these sects, is capable of regressing to a lower spiritual state, while the northern schools claimed precisely the opposite. This brings to mind the whole problem of the first four of Mahādeva's five points, which are concerned exclusively with the nature and attainments of the Arhant. Since the northern and southern branches of the Mahāsāṃghikas differed so radically in their stance on whether or not the Arhant can regress, might they also have differed in their attitudes toward Mahādeva's five points? And if so, how would this affect our view of Mahādeva's role in Mahāsāṃghika sectarianism?

In answering this question, there are three separate issues which claim our attention: (1) the attitudes of the northern and southern Mahāsāṃghikas toward the Arhant, (2) the statements of the northern and southern schools on the subjects of *duḥkha* and the importance of exclamations in relation to the Path, and (3) the place assigned to Mahādeva in the development of Mahāsāṃghika sectarianism according to the various sources at our disposal. Before examining the doctrinal issues, we will first deal with the third point, to determine whether there is any historical basis for expecting the southern schools to have a different attitude toward Mahādeva and his five points than that of the northern schools.

All four of the earliest sect lists mention a division within the Mahāsāṃghika sect which occurred sometime after the initial Mahāsāṃghika-Sthavira schism. In all the accounts, the newly formed subgroup of the Mahāsāṃghikas includes a sect called Caitra,[71] Cetīya,[72] or Caitika.[73] The *Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra* also includes in this subgroup a sect called the Matarīya. Vasumitra lists the Bahuśrutīya, Prajñaptivādin, Aparaśaila, and Uttaraśaila sects as belonging to this movement. All the sources agree, though, that there was a subschism of some kind, arising within the ranks of the Mahāsāṃghikas, which produced one or more new sects, at a time later than the original formation of the Mahāsāṃghika sect.

It is the *Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra*, which is at once the oldest of our sources

and an extremely important one due to its Mahāsāṃghika origin, which provides the most valuable evidence on the place of Mahādeva with respect to the Mahāsāṃghika schools. In this text, along with the listing of the Caitra and Matarīya sects as results of the later schism, is given the name of Mahādeva. This, coupled with the omission of his name in the text's relation of the primary schism, can only mean that Mahādeva was associated in the mind of the author of this text not with the original separation of the Mahāsāṃghikas from the Sthaviras, but with this later schismatic movement within the Mahāsāṃghikas themselves.

The treatise of Vasumitra supports the contention of the *Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra* that the name of Mahādeva is to be connected with the second schism. According to Bareau,[74] the oldest versions of Vasumitra's treatise do not name Mahādeva in connection with the first schism, but only in discussing the later schism of the Caityaśaila. The translation of Hsüan-tsang, which is later, associates him with both schisms and, since the schisms are at least two generations apart, we have the strange result of two monks, both named Mahādeva, both discussing the five points, and both causing schisms connected with the Mahāsāṃghikas. A similar reduplication is found in the work of Bhavya,[75] where the initial schism is said to be the result of the activities of an incarnation of Māra who takes on the form of a monk and preaches the five theses. The second schism is caused by Mahādeva who again propounds the five theses established by his predecessor and founds the Caitīya sect.

How are we to interpret the confusing evidence presented by these texts? Can they be harmonized in any way with the Sarvāstivādin accounts which explicitly name Mahādeva as the perpetrator of the original Mahāsāṃghika-Sthavira schism? We would suggest the following interpretation. Since both the *Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra* and the treatise of Vasumitra, which are our earliest sources on this issue, explicitly connect Mahādeva with the second, rather than the first, of the schisms (the name Mahādeva being associated with the first only in a later translation of Vasumitra), we are inclined to accept these accounts as valid. Even Bhavya, who connects the five points with both schisms, uses the name of Mahādeva only in the account of the second. The name of Mahādeva (who was known to be involved with a schism affecting the Mahāsāṃghikas), and with him the five points, was only later read back into the original schism by subsequent sources. As a result, the later texts attribute the original schism of the Mahāsāṃghikas from the Sthaviras to the activities of Mahādeva, when in fact he was involved only with the second.

Though this thesis explains adequately the discrepancies in the accounts of Mahādeva in the sources discussed above, it does not rest on an interpretation of these traditions alone. There are also strong doctrinal indications that the five points of Mahādeva originally were accepted only by the southern/Caityaśaila schools, and only later were considered to be doctrines of the northern Mahāsāṃghikas as well.

At this point it is necessary to examine in detail those doctrines of both the

northern and the southern Mahāsāṃghika schools which would have some bearing on either of the two major topics of the five points: the status of the Arhant, and the importance of *duḥkha* and the utterance of sounds for progress on the Path. Turning first to the issue of the Arhant, we find a strong divergence between the northern and southern schools on this point. As already mentioned above, the southern schools (which, according to our hypothesis, should be associated with Mahādeva) hold that the Arhant is capable of regression, while according to the northern schools he is not. This indeed is a major difference, and demonstrates one point on which the doctrines of the southern schools would seem much closer to the theses of Mahādeva than would the position of the northern schools. If, as Mahādeva suggests, the Arhant is still far from perfect, then it would follow that he is capable of falling back from his exalted but imperfect state. It would be hard to reconcile the idea of the Arhant's imperfections with the thesis that he has reached such a high state that he is no longer able to regress.

The fifth of Mahādeva's points is concerned with the issue of "verbal utterances," which are usually associated with the exclamation of *duḥkha*. A variety of doctrines ascribed to various Mahāsāṃghika sects may be associated with this point, each of which will be examined here, in an attempt to determine which of the Mahāsāṃghika subsects (i.e., the northern or the southern schools) has the greater doctrinal affinity with the statement of Mahādeva on this point. The doctrinal theses of the Mahāsāṃghikas which seem to be related to this point, based on Bareau's translations,[76] are the following: (1) "to say 'suffering' can help"; (2) "suffering leads to the Way"; (3) "to say 'O suffering!' causes one to know suffering"; (4) "there is vocal utterance by one who has entered into possession of the Way"; (5) "there is vocal utterance in *samādhi*." A further point which associates the view of *duḥkha* with entry into *samādhi*, but does not specifically mention the utterance of sounds is (6) "one enters into *samādhi* by seeing the suffering of the conditioned [dharmas]." Finally, some doctrines which are even further removed from the issue of verbal utterances, but which stress the importance of *duḥkha* are: (7) "suffering is a food"; (8) "there are three truths: suffering, ordinary (truth), and noble (truth)"; (9) "suffering is an absolute reality"; (10) "suffering is *parinispanna*"; (11) "all conditioned [dharmas] are suffering"; and (12) "the teaching of suffering is *lokottara*."

A fact of particular significance is that none of these twelve statements is ever attributed specifically, in any of our sources, to the northern Mahāsāṃghika subsects: the Lokottaravādins, Gokulikas, or Ekavyāvahārikas. They are ascribed to the Mahāsāṃghikas as a whole (when the term is used as a general title), to several of the southern schools, and to the two "pivot" schools, the Bahuśrutīyas and the Prajñaptivādins, which (as noted above) are sometimes classified with the northern group and in other sources with the southern. Never, however, are these doctrines listed as specific tenets of any of the northern schools. This in itself is a fact of major importance, which is augmented by yet another piece of evidence: that several of these doctrines (numbers 3, 6, 7–12) are ascribed *only*

to sects of the southern group and not to the Mahāsāṃghikas in general. These doctrines, which are in the main those connected with the idea of *duḥkha*, demonstrate clearly the importance of that concept for the southern schools. Listed according to the sects to which they belonged, the twelve doctrines are as follows: Mahāsāṃghikas (as a whole): 1, 2, 4, 5, 7; Andhakas: 3; Pūrvaśailas: 4, 5, 7; Cetīyas: 5; Aparaśailas: 5; Uttaraśailas: 9 (some), 10 (some); Bahuśrutīyas: 5, 6, 8, 12; Prajñaptivādins: 9, 11.

Since "Andhaka" is a term synonymous with the Śaila schools as a whole, and since the Cetīya school, according to Bareau,[77] is in all probability the "mother sect" of all the Śaila schools, we can condense this list as follows: Mahāsāṃghikas (as a whole): 1, 2, 4, 5, 7; Cetīya/Śaila Schools (or Andhakas): 3, 4, 5, 7, and (some of the Uttaraśailas) 9 and 10; Bahuśrutīyas: 5, 6, 8, 12; Prajñaptivādins: 9, 11.

The overall result of this listing is that the southern schools are at least as strongly affiliated with the doctrines related to Mahādeva's fifth point as are the Mahāsāṃghikas as a whole, if not even more so, while none of the northern Mahāsāṃghika schools appear in this connection at all. It is clear, therefore, that the fifth point of Mahādeva, like the first four, harmonizes much more clearly with the doctrinal positions of the southern Mahāsāṃghika schools than with those of the northern sects. This confirms, from the doctrinal standpoint, what we have already seen in our review of the sources on Mahāsāṃghika history: that Mahādeva and his five points should be associated not with the original Mahāsāṃghika-Sthavira schism, but rather with a later schism which developed among the ranks of the Mahāsāṃghikas themselves, resulting in the founding of the Cetīya sect (which later produced the Śailas or Andhakas, and the rest of the southern schools) by the followers of Mahādeva.

One final problem remains. If Mahādeva and his five points were accepted only by the southern Mahāsāṃghika schools, and that acceptance brought about a schism of those schools from the northern sects, why then do we find the five points listed (in Vasumitra, Bhavya, and Vinītadeva) as doctrines of the Mahāsāṃghikas in general? There are two possible answers: (1) that at a later time all the Mahāsāṃghikas did in fact accept these points, or (2) that the writers of these treatises, knowing that Mahādeva and his doctrines were associated with the Mahāsāṃghikas, mistakenly read these famous theses back into the doctrinal lists of the Mahāsāṃghikas as a whole. It is significant that none of the sources which do this are Mahāsāṃghika works. As outsiders, writing several centuries after the events with which they were concerned, they might very well have confused what was originally an intra-Mahāsāṃghika controversy with the dispute which brought about the original appearance of the sect. We have already seen that this is, in all probability, what occurred with the historical accounts of Mahādeva's place in the sectarian movement, and it is quite likely that the same process has taken place here. Furthermore, the only Mahāsāṃghika source which lists the subsects of that school after the first period (i.e., the Mahāsāṃghika list given by Bhavya) is totally ignorant of the

northern schools, listing only the names of the southern sects. If Bareau is correct in interpreting this to mean that the northern schools had by this time disappeared,[78] it would be easy to see how the doctrines of Mahādeva could have been falsely attributed to schools which were no longer in existence.

Having shown that the original Mahāsāṃghika-Sthavira schism could not have been caused either by the lax practices of the Vṛjiputraka monks (who were not the same as the Mahāsāṃghikas at all) or by the five doctrinal points of Mahādeva (which involved only part, and not all, of the Mahāsāṃghikas), we must now confront the question of what the real reason for that schism could have been.

III. The Mahāsāṃghika-Sthavira schism: a new approach

Earlier in this paper we examined the two traditional theses most often associated with the Mahāsāṃghika-Sthavira schism: (1) that the schism occurred because of the ten points of discipline cited at the Vaiśālī council, and (2) the notorious five points of Mahādeva which, to a large extent, redefine the notion of the Arhant. Each of these theses maintains Mahāsāṃghika laxity, the former stressing disciplinary laxity, and the latter stressing an extension of this enterprise into the philosophical domain. Another possibility is found in the writings of André Bareau. He states, "On the contrary, if one compares the rigorist attitude taken by the future Mahāsāṅghikas at the time of the second council with their attitude at the time of the schism, one sees that their austerity has diminished significantly during that time, and an interval of thirty-seven years between the two events would not seem at all exaggerated."[79] This statement is particularly revealing on two accounts. First, it sets the stage for Bareau to advance his personal thesis that the actual schism took place 137 A.N., a date which we have associated above with the Saṃmitīya list of Bhavya's *Nikāyabhedavibhaṅgavyākhyāna*. Although we will discuss the date of the schism elsewhere in this paper, it does seem that Bareau's main reason in choosing this date (after, of course, dismissing 100 A.N. and 160 A.N. as being "manifestly aberrant"[80]) as opposed to the date 116 A.N., offered by Vasumitra's *Samayabhedoparacanacakra*, is that thirty-seven years is more reasonable than sixteen years for laxity to develop. Second, Bareau reveals that he does shift position on the laxity question. In Bareau's estimate, the schismatic Mahāsāṃghikas were clearly lax in discipline. However, he also believes that the schism resulted, to some degree, from Mahādeva's five theses. We have already seen that Demiéville's attempt to effect an explanation of the manner in which Dharma and Vinaya issues were interrelated is somewhat suspect. Bareau offers another possibility, stated, curiously enough, immediately following his discussion of Demiéville's notions on this point. Bareau claims,

> Is it not possible to reconcile these two traditions, which appear to be so contradictory? Probably so. In fact, although the above five theses

> are never mentioned or discussed in Vinaya works, they are, nonetheless, closely connected with monastic discipline. The first, related to the presence of nocturnal seminal emissions among Arhants, is nothing but a corollary of the first saṅghāvaśeṣa, which, in all the Prātimokṣas or monastic codes, condemns the monk who, except in the case of a dream, lets his sperm flow. The Sthaviras reinforced the rigor of this rule in eliminating, for the Arhant, the excuse of the dream, which was left to the ordinary monk, while the Mahāsāṅghikas adhered to the letter of this article of the disciplinary code. As to the other four theses, they could have arisen from speculations on the spiritual and intellectual qualities required of the ācārya and upādhyāya masters as they are enumerated in the chapters related to ordination (upasaṃpadā). Here again, the Sthaviras increased the rigor of the rule, while the Mahāsāṅghikas interpreted it in a more laxist sense. In summary, the subjects of the quarrel belonged as much to the abhivinaya as to the abhidharma.[81]

This is most ingenious, and the argument does not fall prey to the manner of criticism directed at Demiéville. Nevertheless, if our arguments above are correct regarding the absence of laxity in the Mahāsāṃghika school, both in disciplinary and philosophical matters, then Bareau's thesis stands contradicted, and to some extent we have disparaged the manner in which supposed laxity on either issue tends to be reciprocally influencing in the eyes of most Western scholars of Buddhism.

As noted above, in the absence of disciplinary laxity, and with Mahādeva located at a somewhat later date than is traditionally ascribed to him, both accepted tenets for the great schism in early Buddhism (and the various combinations of them) lose their impact and authenticity as explanatory devices. However, the basic problem still persists. Where, if anywhere, can we find evidence that is sufficiently authoritative to enable us to unravel the mystery of the Mahāsāṃghika-Sthavira schism? Perhaps we can employ a two-fold approach, utilizing the Mahāsāṃghika texts themselves, that will bring us significantly closer to a resolution of the issue. On the one hand, we can utilize the *Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra*, translated into Chinese between A.D. 317 and 420 but likely to have been composed by around 300,[82] and representing the oldest of all the sectarian treatises; and on the other hand, we can refer to the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya itself, noted by many scholars to be the most ancient of all the Vinayas.

The *Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra* relates an episode in which an old monk rearranges and augments the traditional Vinaya, said to have been codified by Kāśyapa at the alleged first council of Rājagṛha, thus causing dissension among the monks which required the king's arbitration. Lamotte offers a translation of this passage, taken from *Taishō* 1465, page 900b:[83]

> At that time there was an old bhikṣu hungry for glory and given to disputes. He copied and rearranged our Vinaya, developing and augment-

> ing what Kāśyapa had codified and which was called "Vinaya of the Great Assembly" (*Ta-chong-liu: Mahāsaṃghavinaya*). He collected from the outside materials neglected [until then], with the intention of tricking the beginners. Thus he formed a separate party which disputed with [the Great Assembly]. There were then some bhikṣus who asked the king to pass judgment. The king called together the two schools and had a suffrage taken by black and white tablets (śalākā), proclaiming that those who approved of the old Vinaya could take the black tablets, and those who approved of the new Vinaya the white tablets. Those who took the black tablets numbered more than ten thousand, and those who took the white tablets were only a little over a hundred persons. The king considered that [the doctrines of the two parties represented] were both the work of the Buddha, and since their preferences were not the same, [the monks of the two camps] should not live together. As those who studied the old Vinaya were in the majority, they were called the Mahāsāṃghikas (*Mo-ho-seng-k'i*); those who studied the new [Vinaya] were in the minority, but they were all Sthaviras (*Changtso*, senior members): thus they were named *T'a-pi-lo* (Sthaviras).

It is clear from the above quoted passage that from the Mahāsāṃghika perspective, the real issue culminating in the schism was Vinaya expansion. The Mahāsāṃghikas are designated in the passage as those who study the "ancient Vinaya," and this tallies extremely well with the conclusions of Bareau, Pachow, Hofinger, Frauwallner, and Roth (cited above, and see n. 29) that the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya represents the most ancient of all the Vinaya traditions. It is interesting as well that each of these scholars seems to arrive at his conclusion by applying a separate critical technique. Bareau arrives at his conclusion seemingly on the basis that the Śaikṣa-dharma section of the Mahāsāṃghika *Prātimokṣa-sūtra* is shorter in length, and significantly so, than other schools' versions of the same text. Pachow bases his conclusion on a careful study of the entire *Prātimokṣa-sūtra* (in almost all available recensions) of all the schools. Hofinger's thesis is founded on an examination of all the second council materials found in the various Vinayas. Frauwallner has studied the Skandhaka sections of the various Vinayas and offers some content and stylistic comments, and Roth investigates the language and grammar of the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya (as preserved in the Sanskrit texts of the Lokottaravādin subsect). What, however, is the nature of this "ancient Vinaya," and on what basis does it preserve a shorter text than that of the Sthaviras (and, for that matter, the other early Buddhist groups)?

If we focus, as a means of comparative assessment, on the basic monastic disciplinary text, that is, the *Prātimokṣa-sūtra*, we will begin to see the manner in which the Sthaviras and other sectarian groups began to expand their respective texts. In this regard, we may consult table 1. This chart shows that there is a remarkable agreement in all the schools on six of the eight categories of

Table 1

School (Language)	*Bhikṣu Prātimokṣa Sūtra*								
	I	*II*	*III*	*IV*	*V*	*VI*	*VII*	*VIII*	*Total*
MSG (Chinese)	4	13	2	30	92	4	66	7	218
MSG (Sanskrit)	4	13	2	30	92	4	67	7	219
T (Pāli)	4	13	2	30	92	4	75	7	227
K (Chinese)	4	13	2	30	90	4	96	7	246
D (Chinese)	4	13	2	30	90	4	100	7	250
MHS (Chinese)	4	13	2	30	90	4	100	7	250
MSV (Chinese)	4	13	2	30	90	4	98	7	248
MSV (Tibetan)	4	13	2	30	90	4	108	7	258
MSV (Sanskrit)	4	13	2	30	90	4	108	7	258
S (Chinese)	4	13	2	30	90	4	113	7	263
S (Sanskrit)	4	13	2	30	90	4	113	7	263
Mahāvyutpatti	4	13	2	30	90	4	105	7	255

Sources.—The notion for this table, as well as much of its content, is taken from Pachow (n. 2 above), pp. 27–28. Information on the Sanskrit texts was gleaned from the following sources: Mahāsāṃghika—Pachow and Mishra's text (n. 12 above): Mūlasarvāstivādin—Ankul Chandra Banerjee, ed., *Prātimokṣa-Sūtram [Mūlasarvāstīvāda]* (Calcutta: Calcutta Oriental Press, 1954); Sarvāstīvādin—Louis Finot, ed., "Le Prātimoksasutra des Servāstivadins," *Journal Asialique* 2 ser. 11 (November–December 1913): 405–557. Due to the fragmentary character of this last manuscript, Finot's numbering system, which was kept in line with the Chinese text, is only partially correct.

Key

MSG: Mahāsāṃghika	I: Pārājika-dharmas
T: Theravādin	II: Saṃghāvaśeṣa-dharmas
K: Kāśyapīya	III: Aniyata-dharmas
D: Dharmaguptaka	IV: Niḥsargika-Pāyantika-dharmas
MHS: Mahiśāsaka	V: Pāyantika-dharmas
MSV: Mūlasarvāstivādin	VI: Pratideśnīya-dharmas
S: Sarvāstivādin	VII: Śaikṣa-dharmas
	VIII: Adhikaraṇa-Śamatha-dharmas

offenses. One can find diversity only in the Pāyantikadharma and Śaikṣa-dharma sections. The disparity in the Pāyantika-dharma section, in which only the Mahāsāṃghikas and Theravādins list ninety-two rules while the other sects list ninety, is easily resolved. The two extra rules are in some ways restatements of issues already dealt with in this section, and the other schools likely eliminated what they considered to be redundancy.[84] The Śaikṣa-dharma section, though, is a completely separate matter, and it is here that we see great diversity in the various schools, not just in number but in content as well. Now it is not our intention to recount the issue of Śaikṣa-dharma development, as that has already been done.[85] Nevertheless, this portion of the Vinaya does, in fact, represent the one clear area in which expansion and embellishment of the basic text is focused. Bareau does notice this, remarking, ". . . one may justly think that the cause of the quarrel resided in the composition of the code of the monks and, more specifically, in the list of the śikṣakaraṇīya."[86] He dismisses it, however, by

noting, "It is improbable that such a serious conflict could have been provoked by dissension on such trivial subject."[87] Strangely enough, Bareau does concede, immediately following the above quoted statement, that the majority of points on which the Vṛjiputraka bhikṣus were reproved were scarcely more important than the ones cited here. Bareau's statements are very reminiscent of Lamotte, who says, "Each Buddhist school tries to set up its own Prātimokṣa, but between the diverse lists one can only state minimal differences."[88] It is here that we think Bareau (and Lamotte) has too easily dismissed what is in all likelihood the real cause of the schism. The *Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra* has informed us that the cause of the schism was Vinaya expansion, and here we have located the substantiation of this hypothesis as witnessed by the Mahāsāṃghika *Prātimokṣa-sūtra* presenting the shortest list of offenses. It is debatable as well regarding whether the Śaikṣa-dharmas are even to be regarded as full-fledged offenses. In this regard, Pachow has stated, "The nature of these rules is essentially concerned with the daily conduct and decorum of the Bhikṣus such as: walking, moving to and fro, looking, dressing, contracting, and stretching and so forth. They do not come under any penal section inasmuch as there will not be any sanction or punishment for their breaches or violations."[89] This certainly seems to present added confirmation that the Mahāsāṃghikas were not to be regarded as lax simply because of a short Śaikṣa-dharma section, and in no way conflicts with our Vinaya expansion hypothesis, but rather supports it. Although Bareau ascribes little value to this section of rules, as a means for the demarcation of schismatics, it can easily be shown that this very section of the *Prātimokṣa-sūtra* has profound implications in the later sectarian movement. An example of this point may be taken with regard to the Dharmaguptakas, who posit twenty-six rules in this section to delegate appropriate conduct at a *stūpa*. The appearance of these particular twenty-six rules in the Dharmagupataka *Prātimokṣa-sūtra* (and their absence in the texts of the other schools) reveals a considerable amount about the place of this school, historically, in the early sectarian movement, and equally, offers some insight into the ritual applications of their doctrinal affinities. Similar arguments (on issues other than *stūpa* worship) can be made for other Buddhist sects.[90]

One final question remains regarding the issue of Vinaya expansion. Why do the future Sthaviras choose to enlarge the Vinaya? It is not unlikely that the council of Vaiśālī, in representing the first real threat of division in the quasi-unified Buddhist saṃgha, made all Buddhists aware of the problem of concord now that the Buddha was long dead. In seeking to insure the continued unity that all Buddhists must have desired, they simply began to expand the disciplinary code in the seemingly appropriate direction. Just as the respect for orthodoxy inhibited the participants at the alleged first council of Rājagṛha from excluding the "lesser and minor points" which the Buddha had noted to be expendable (and since Buddha gave no indication of what the specific points were, the monks would have had to risk orthodoxy by guessing, however intelligently they performed their task), the same respect for orthodoxy inhibited the

future Mahāsāṃghikas from tolerating this new endeavor, however well intentioned it was.

IV. The date of the schism

It goes without saying that the dating of events in early Indian Buddhism is generally problematic, and this is seen in the extreme when applied to the issue of dating the first Buddhist schism. Four dates have traditionally been offered as possibilities. These include 100 A.N., 116 A.N., 137 A.N., and 160 A.N. Each of these must be examined in brief with an eye toward the potential authenticity of any of them.

The date of 100 A.N. is found primarily in two sources: the Pāli texts and the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra*. The Pāli sources, of course, link the schism to the second council, and we have already demonstrated the inadmissibility of that thesis. Consequently, their interpretation of the dating must also be dismissed. The *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra*, dating later than the *Vibhāṣa* but before 400, also notes the schism to have occurred in 100 A.N. It does this by linking the schism, the date, and King Aśoka. The reasoning is straightforward, if inaccurate. From one legend presented in the *Divyāvadāna* and *Aśokāvadāna*, in which Buddha is said to predict the reign of the great Aśoka in Kusumapura 100 years after the parinirvāṇa, the king and the date are harmonized. The text then assumes that an event such as the great schism could only have occurred under the reign of the great Aśoka.[91] Obviously, the thesis is weak in its dating of Dharmāśoka and its assumptions regarding the possibility of the schism only under the reign of a great king. The 160 A.N. date is presented in a reportedly Sthavira (but actually Sarvāstivādiṇ) list in Bhavya's *Nikāyabhedavibhaṅgavyākhyāna*. This date can be ruled out on the very likely basis of digital confusion or inversion, resulting in a date of 116 A.N. rather than 160 A.N., and Bareau explains very clearly the intricate mechanics of such an error, both in Chinese and Tibetan.[92] It is curious, though, that the correction of this error yields the date 116 A.N., to which we shall refer later. The date 137 A.N. emerges from a Saṃmitīya list in Bhavya's *Nikāyabhedavibhaṅgavyākhyāna* and seems to locate the schism under the reign of Mahāpadma and Nanda (or more likely Mahāpadma Nanda). There is a small problem of detail with this date as Nanda does not come to rule until 140 A.N.[93] (and even if these are *two separate* rulers, the Purāṇas and Tāranātha note Nanda to be the father of Mahāpadma). Nevertheless, it is this date that Bareau chooses to accept as appropriate with regard to providing sufficient time for Mahāsāṃghika laxity to develop. The final date offered is 116 A.N., arising from Vasumitra's *Samayabhedoparacanacakra*. The problem here is that Vasumitra associates the schism with the reign of Dharmāśoka. It is our contention that Vasumitra (and others), writing well after the death of Dharmāśoka but almost certainly having been influenced indirectly by this great king's impact on Indian Buddhist history, simply confused the bare name Aśoka with Dharmāśoka, rather than identifying it with Kālāśoka, who is said to have ruled in India from 90 to

118 A.N.,[94] and of course this is consonant with Vasumitra's date for the schism. Now we need not belabor the issue of dates, kings, and their relationships, as this work has already been meticulously done by others. We agree with Bareau that the dates 100 A.N. and 160 A.N. are unreasonable choices for the reasons stated. We further agree with Bareau that two old Kashmiri texts, the *Vibhāṣā* and the *Śāriputraparipṛcchā-sūtra*, would indeed not remain silent on the king issue if the schism had taken place under Dharmāśoka,[95] but we would add that they might not be inclined to mention a lesser king, such as Kālāśoka, and this seems to be precisely what happened. Consequently, while we admit that there are some problems with each of the two remaining dates, 116 A.N. and 137 A.N., we reject 137 A.N. for two primary reasons. First, we have shown clearly that no Mahāsāṃghika laxity developed, and this undercuts that line of argumentation. Second, if we are right in assuming that the Vaiśālī council instilled great fear of separation into the Buddhist community, which the future Sthaviras sought to remedy by expanding the Vinaya, then this call to action would have occurred more quickly than witnessing a thirty-seven-year time lag. By the above process of elimination, we are led to accept the date 116 A.N. for the schism. We might add too that much of the information presented, when read from this point of view, seems to form a unified statement which finally unravels the mystery of the rise of Buddhist sectarianism.

Notes

1 See, e.g., M. Hofinger, *Etude sur la concile de Vaiśālā* (Louvain: Bureaux de Muséon, 1946); Paul Demiéville, "A propos du concile de Vaiśālī," *T'oung Pao* 40 (1951): 239–96; André Bareau, *Les Premiers Conciles bouddhiques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955); and Nalinaksha Dutt, "The Second Buddhist Council," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (March 1959): 45–56.

2 W. Pachow, "A Comparative Study of the Prātimokṣa," *Sino-Indian Studies* 4, no. 2 (1951): 53.

3 Charles S. Prebish, "A Review of Scholarship on the Buddhist Councils," *Journal of Asian Studies* 33, no. 2 (February 1974): 239–54.

4 Demiéville maintains laxity inherent in the future Mahāsāṃghikas at the time of the council of Vaiśālī, while Bareau maintains that the laxity did not emerge until after the proceedings. Thus they make somewhat differing arguments with regard to disciplinary laxity.

5 André Bareau, *Les Sectes bouddhiques du petit véhicule* (Saigon: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1955), p. 20.

6 For a discussion of the sect lists presented in these texts, see Bareau, *Les Sectes bouddhiques*, pp. 19–27.

7 Demiéville, pp. 260–61.

8 Wilhelm Geiger, trans., *The Mahāvaṃsa, or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon* (reprint; London: Luzac & Co., for Pali Text Society, 1964), p. lix.

9 Bareau, *Les Premiers Conciles bouddhiques*, p. 67.

10 Ibid., pp. 76–78.

11 Ibid., p. 78.

12 For the text, see W. Pachow and Ramakanta Mishra, eds., "The Prātimokṣa Sūtra of the Mahāsāṃghikas," *Journal of the Gaṅgānāth Jhā Research Institute* 10, nos. 1–4

(November–August 1952–53): 1–48, appendix. For the translation, see Charles S. Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline: The Sanskrit Prātimokṣa Sūtras of the Mahāsāṃghikas and Mūlasarvāstivādins* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975).

13 J. F. Dickson, ed. and trans., "The Pātimokkha, Being the Buddhist Office of the Confession of Priests: The Pali Text, with a Translation and Notes," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, n.s. 8 (1876): 85, 113.

14 Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, p. 80.

15 Dickson, "The Pātimokkha," pp. 85, 113.

16 Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, p. 80.

17 Dickson, "The Pātimokkha," pp. 85, 112.

18 Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, p. 80.

19 Dickson, "The Pātimokkha," pp. 86, 114.

20 Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, p. 88.

21 Dickson, "The Pātimokkha," pp. 90, 118.

22 Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, p. 90.

23 Dickson, "The Pātimokkha," pp. 81, 108.

24 Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, p. 70.

25 Bareau, *Les Premiers Conciles bouddhiques*, pp. 76–78.

26 Prebish, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, pp. 80, 88, 80, respectively.

27 Gustav Roth, ed., *Bhikṣuṇī-Vinaya: Manual of Discipline for Buddhist Nuns* (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1970), pp. 327–34.

28 Demiéville, p. 275.

29 Refer to André Bareau, "La Construction et le culte des stūpa d'après les Vinayapiṭaka," *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* 50, no. 2 (1962): 273; Pachow (n. 2 above), pp. 61–62; Hofinger (n. 1 above), p. 237; Erich Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature* (Rome: Instituto per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1956), p. 61; and Roth, p. vii, where Roth refers to Fa-hien's claim that the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya is the original.

30 Bareau, *Les Premiers Conciles bouddhiques*, p. 78.

31 Hofinger, p. 179.

32 Roth, p. x (brackets are mine).

33 Ibid., p. viii.

34 Etienne Lamotte, *Histoire du bouddhisms indien des origines à l'ère Śaka* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1958), p. 315.

35 Bareau, *Les Sectes bouddhiques*, pp. 20–21 (translation of the text by Jiryo Masuda, "Origin and Doctrines of Early Indian Buddhist Schools," *Asia Major* 2 [1925]: 1–78).

36 Ibid., p. 18.

37 Ibid., pp. 16–22.

38 *Taishō* 1465, discussed in Bareau, *Les Sectes bouddhiques*, pp. 16–18.

39 Masuda, p. 14.

40 *Taishō* 1545. A translation of the portion of chap. 99 which deals with Mahādeva appears in an unpublished paper by Victor Mair, "An Asian Story of the Oedipus Type." This paper will soon be included in a folklore anthology to be published by Harvard University Press.

41 Mair, p. 9.

42 This is translated by André Bareau, "Trois traités sur les sectes bouddhiques attribués à Vasumitra, Bhavya et Vinītadeva," *Journal Asiatique* 244 (1956): 167–71.

43 Ibid., p. 168.

44 This is translated by Paul Demiéville, "L'Origine des sectes bouddhiques d'après Paramārtha," *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* 1 (1931–32): 14–64.

45 Ibid., p. 20.
46 Bareau, "Trois traités sur les sectes bouddhiques," pp. 172–91. For a discussion of the Saṃmitīya origin of this tradition, see Bareau, *Les Sectes bouddhiques*, p. 17.
47 Bareau, *Les Sectes bouddhiques*, pp. 16–22.
48 Bareau, "Trois traités sur les sectes bouddhiques," p. 172.
49 Bareau, *Les Sectes bouddhiques*, pp. 22–23.
50 Ibid., pp. 17–21.
51 The five points of Mahādeva are listed by Vasumitra as thesis 28 of the Mahāsāṃghikas (see Masuda, p. 24).
52 The five points are summarized on p. 8 of Mair's translation of this portion of the Mahāvibhāṣā.
53 Bhavya lists the five points as theses 1–5 of the Mahāsāṃghikas (see Bareau, "Trois traités sur le sectes bouddhiques," pp. 172–73).
54 A variant version of the five theses is given by Bhavya as thesis 13 of the Ekavyāvahārikas (see Bareau, "Trois traités sur le sectes bouddhiques," p. 174).
55 Vinītadeva lists the five points as thesis 16 of the Mahāsāṃghikas (see Bareau, "Trois traités sur le sectes bouddhiques," p. 192).
56 The list of the five points according to Paramārtha is found in Demiéville, "L'Origine des sectes bouddhiques, p. 31.
57 The *Kathāvatthu* lists the five points at 2. 1–6. See Shwe Zan Aung and Mrs. Rhys Davids, trans., *Points of Controversy* (London: Luzac & Co., for Pali Text Society, 1915), pp. 111–24. This translation will be used here, unless otherwise noted.
58 Ibid., p. 117.
59 Mair, p. 6.
60 Demiéville, "L'Origine des sectes bouddhiques," p. 32.
61 Aung and Davids, p. 119, translate the Pāli *atthi arahatto paravitāraṇā* as "the Arahant is excelled by others." However, as Louis de La Vallée Poussin points out in "The 'Five Points' of Mahādeva and the Kathāvatthu," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, n.s. 42 (1910): 420, the term *vitāraṇā* may also be translated as "leading over, bringing across." Furthermore, Demiéville, "L'Origine des sectes bouddhiques," p. 32, n.d, points out that the Chinese term *tou*, which he translates "(faire) passer, (faire) traverser," corresponds exactly to the *vitāraṇā* of the *Kathāvatthu*. We have therefore chosen to translate the Pāli as "the Arahant is led across by others," since the general agreement of the sources seems to indicate that this was the meaning originally intended. The rest of the discussion of this point given on p. 119 of the Pāli translation is in complete harmony with this interpretation, so there is no reason not to accept this revised translation.
62 Demiéville, "L'Origine des sectes bouddhiques," p. 32.
63 Masuda, p. 24, translates "the path is realized by utterances," but we have used a more literal translation based on the Tibetan (*lam agra 'byin-pa daṅ-bcas-pa*) "the path is accompanied by the emission of voice."
64 This problem is discussed, but not resolved, by La Vallée Poussin, p. 422.
65 Mair, p. 7.
66 Demiéville, "L'Origine des sectes bouddhiques," pp. 32–33.
67 *Fen-pie-kong-yo-louen*, a half-Mahāsāṃghika, half-Mahāyānist commentary on the Chinese Ekottarāgama (translated between A.D. 25 and 220) (see Etienne Lamotte, "Buddhist Controversy over the Five Propositions," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 32 [1956]: 156).
68 Mahāsāṃghika theses 16–19 (see Masuda, p. 21).
69 Ibid., p. 38 (thesis 1 of the Śaila schools).
70 Nalinaksha Dutt, *Buddhist Sects in India* (Calcutta: K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1970), pp. 68–72.

71 See the *Śāriputrapariprcchā-sūtra*, cited in Bareau, *Les Sectes bouddhiques*, p. 17.
72 See the *Dīpavaṃsa*, cited in Bareau, *Les Sectes bouddhiques*, p. 16.
73 See Bhavya's Saṃitīya tradition (list 3) and Vasumitra's *Samayabhedoparacanacakra*, given in Bareau, *Les Sectes bouddhiques*, pp. 17 and 18, respectively.
74 Bareau, *Les Premiers Conciles bouddhiques*, p. 98.
75 Bareau, "Trois traités sur les sectes bouddhiques," pp. 172 and 176.
76 According to the listing given by Bareau in *Les Sectes bouddhiques*, the twelve doctrinal points to be discussed are as follows: (1) thesis 32 of the Mahāsāṃghikas; (2) thesis 31 of the Mahāsāṃghikas; (3) thesis 43 of the Andhakas; (4) theses 27 and 30 of the Mahāsāṃghikas, and thesis 7 of the Pūrvaśailas; (5) theses 27 and 30 of the Mahāsāṃghikas, and thesis 7 of the Pūrvaśailas (as in 4 above), as well as theses 2 of the Bahuśrutīyas, 3 of the Cetīyas, and 7 of the Aparaśailas (and thesis 5 of the Haimavatas); (6) thesis 5 of the Bahuśrutīyas; (7) thesis 34 of the Mahāsāṃghikas, and thesis 8 of the Pūrvaśailas; (8) thesis 4 of the Bahuśrutīyas; (9) thesis 4 of the Prajñaptivādins; (10) thesis 45 of "some Uttaraśailas" (as well as thesis 10 of the Hetuvādins); (11) thesis 3 of the Prajñaptivādins (as well as thesis 7 of the Hetuvādins); (12) thesis 1 of the Bahuśrutīyas.
77 Bareau, *Les Sectes bouddhiques*, pp. 89, 88.
78 Ibid., p. 23.
79 Bareau, *Les Premiers Conciles bouddhiques*, p. 89.
80 Ibid., p. 88.
81 Ibid., pp. 95–96.
82 Bareau, *Les Sectes bouddhiques*, pp. 17, 21.
83 Lamotte, *Histoire du bouddhisms indien*, p. 189.
84 Charles S. Prebish, "The Prātimokṣa Puzzle: Fact versus Fantasy," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, no. 2 (April–June 1974): 173.
85 See Pachow, pp. 59–64 and 69–79; and Prebish, "The Prātimokṣa Puzzle," pp. 173–76.
86 Bareau, *Les Premiers Conciles bouddhiques*, p. 94.
87 Ibid.
88 Lamotte, *Histoire du bouddhisme indien*, p. 181.
89 Pachow, *A Comparative Study of the Prātimokṣa*, p. 69.
90 E.g., see Prebish, " 'The Prātimokṣa Puzzle," pp. 174–76.
91 André Bareau, "La Date du nirvāṇa," *Journal Asiatique* 241 (1953): 39–43.
92 Ibid., p. 45.
93 See the king list in Lamotte, *Histoire du bouddhisme indien*, p. 96.
94 Ibid.
95 Bareau, *Les Sectes bouddhiques*, p. 31.

29

THE SEVERAL BODIES OF THE BUDDHA

Reflections on a neglected aspect of Theravāda tradition

Frank E. Reynolds

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There is no dearth of scholarship concerning the various conceptions of the bodies of the Buddha which have developed within the history of Buddhist symbolization and thought. Excellent studies have been carried through by a number of eminent buddhologists, including Louis de LaVallée Poussin, Nalinaksha Dutt, D. T. Suzuki, Maryla Falk, Paul Mus, Paul Demieville, and, most recently, Nagao Gadjin.[1] However in every case the primary objective of this research has been to interpret the emergence and meaning of the doctrine of the three bodies of the Buddha (the *dharmakāya*, the *saṃboghakāya*, and the *nirmāṇakāya*) in the Mahayana and especially the Yogācāra schools.[2] As a result the continuing evolution of conceptions of the Buddha bodies in the Theravada tradition in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia has been almost totally ignored. Since it was in one of Professor Eliade's fascinating and wide-ranging courses on "Myth and Ritual" that I was first alerted to the vast richness of the *kāya* symbolism in Buddhism, it seemed appropriate to take the occasion of this volume dedicated to him to point out this rather important lacuna in the existing scholarship and to at least begin the task of filling it. In order to do this I will first call attention to the fact that the *dhammakāya* and *rūpakāya* embody the two basic Buddhological realities on which Theravada religion has historically grounded itself. Second, I will discuss the way in which the mainstream of Theravada interpretation has developed the conception of the body which the Buddha acquired through his supranormal and ultimately soteriological attainments. Finally, I will consider an interesting variant of this latter tradition which seems to have had a long though rather obscure career on the fringes of the Theravada community.

Dhammakāya, rūpakāya, and Theravada community

In considering the structure and development of early Buddhism and the subsequent Theravada tradition, it is difficult to overemphasize the importance of a very basic distinction which is made in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta. In this text, which was composed within a century or so after the actual decease of the Founder, his activities during the last months of his life are described and his final instructions to the community of *bhikkhus* are recounted. As the narrative proceeds, it recounts that on a certain day the Blessed One addressed the venerable Ānanda and said, "It may be Ānanda, that in some of you the thought may arise, 'The word of the Master is ended, we have no teacher any more.' But it is not thus, Ānanda, that you should regard it. The truths [*dhamma*] and the rules of the order [*vinaya*] which I have set forth and laid down for you all, let them, after I am gone, be the Teacher to you."[3] In addition he gave his followers instructions that his physical remains should be turned over to the wise and the noblemen among the laity who should perform a cremation ceremony in the manner ordinarily reserved for a Cakkavatti (Wheel-rolling) king and that the laity should then, as in the case of a Cakkavatti king, erect a stupa in his memory.

The early legends which tell of the events following the Buddha's demise reaffirm this distinction between the two legacies which he left to the two different segments of the Buddhist community. According to a cycle of legends which is closely bound up with Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, within a few months of his decease the Buddha's leading disciples called a great council known as the Council of Rājagaha at which the *dhamma* and the *vinaya* were recited and their authority affirmed. On the other hand, the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta itself reports that immediately following the Buddha's demise his relics were turned over to the noble clan which ruled the village of Kusinagara near which the great decease had occurred and that the cremation was performed in the manner prescribed. It goes on to report that, as a result of the desire of a number of neighboring rulers to possess at least a portion of the relics, they were divided and that a number of separate stupas were then built in various areas in order to house the portions which had been distributed.

There is a strong body of evidence which suggests that during the canonical period this division both grounded and reflected the realities of life in the Buddhist community. The study, recitation, and interpretation of the remembered teachings provided a major focal point of identity and life in the early Buddhist order of *bhikkhus*,[4] and particularly after the time of King Asoka (the third century of the Buddhist era, ca. 250 B.C.) the reliquary stupas and the cult which was associated with them came to play an increasingly important role as a prime focal point of Buddhist identity and life among the laity.[5] Moreover, in the period between the closing of the canon and the translation of the Sinhalese commentaries into Pali (ca. the fifth century A.D.) the two legacies came to be referred to as the Buddha's *dhammakāya* on the one hand and his *rūpakāya* on

the other. In Milinda's Questions, for example, the term *dhammakāya* is used in a context in which it is clear that it is being identified with the scriptural tradition.[6] And in the Sumaṅgalavilāsinī (1, 34 and 3, 865) the equation of the *dhammakāya* with the Tipiṭaka (the three baskets of the fully developed canon, i.e., the Sutta Piṭaka, the Vinaya Piṭaka, and the Abhidhamma Piṭaka) is quite explicit. As for the *rūpakāya*, the term is introduced and identified with the physical body of the Buddha which manifests the thirty-two major and the eighty minor signs traditionally associated with Mahāpurisa (Great Beings) who are destined to attain the status either of a Cakkavatti king or a Buddha.[7] This terminological development, it should be noted, corresponds with the roughly contemporaneous iconographic process through which the process of housing the Buddha's relics in stupas came to be supplemented by the practice of housing them in anthropomorphic images which explicitly portrayed his physical form as that of a Mahāpurisa.[8]

In the tradition of Buddhist chronicles which developed in Sri Lanka and was continued in Southeast Asia, the emphasis on the Buddha's dual legacy and its maintenance through the course of Buddhist history provided the preeminent theme. The major chronicles such as the Mahāvaṇsa (Ceylon, fifth century A.D.) and the Jinakālamalī (northern Thailand, sixteenth century A.D.) constituted what might be described as extended biographies of the Buddha. They began with accounts of the Buddha's previous lives and his final life as Gotama, and then went on to recount the fate of the two legacies which he left to his followers—the *dhamma* or *dhammakāya* legacy, which was manifested in the Pali scriptures, and the relic or *rūpakāya* legacy, which was manifested in the most important stupas and images.[9] What is more, certain major patterns of symbolism which can be reconstructed from the chronicles and other archeological, architectural, and iconographic data have as their basic theme the copresence of the Buddha's *dhamma* or *dhammakāya* represented by the scripture (in this connection it is interesting to note that the Tipiṭaka was often kept in containers which had an obvious resemblance to a coffin) and his *rūpakāya* represented by a reliquary stupa, a reliquary image, or in some particularly interesting cases by both.[10]

The central importance which became attached to the canonical scriptures which manifested the *dhamma* or *dhammakāya*, to the reliquary stupas and images which manifested the *rūpakāya*, and to the copresence of the two as the basic *sine qua non* for the establishment and maintenance of Buddhism as a historic religion is a theme which can be traced in a variety of texts and cultic situations in various areas of Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka. However since I have already written a rather extensive article on that topic which will soon be appearing in another context, I would like to turn now to a related but nevertheless distinct form which the symbolism of the bodies of the Buddha has been given in the Theravada world.[11]

The several bodies and "orthodox" soteriology

Within the Pali scriptures there is a second kind of distinction between the bodies of the Buddha which can also be discerned. It involves a differentiation between the purely temporary physical body with which the Buddha was born and the body(ies) which he attained through his religious practices, and it takes two different forms. A number of canonical passages suggest that through his meditational efforts the Buddha generated out of his physical body a *manomaya* (mind-made) body which was of quite different sort.[12] Other canonical passages suggest that in addition to his normal human body he possessed a supranormal body which, in one very famous *sutta*, is specifically described as a *dhammakāya*.

The most important scriptural passage which deals with the *manomaya* body is highlighted by Eliade in his classic work, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*.[13] In a *sutta* which is incorporated in the Majjhima Nikāya and is singled out for special attention in Buddhagosha's *Path of Purification*, the Buddha affirms that he has called into being "out of this body another body of the mind's creation, complete in all its limbs and members, and with transcendental faculties: It is just like a man who should draw a reed from its sheath—or a snake from its slough—or a sword from its scabbard, recognizing that the reed, the snake or the sword was one thing and the sheath, slough or scabbard was another."[14] The Buddha attains this body through concentrative meditation known as *jhāna*, and having attained it he is able to visit the various heavenly realms where the Brahma deities live. Or to put this latter point in a somewhat different way, this is the body which is associated with the attainment of the cosmological realms in which there are only attenuated material qualities (*rūpadhātu*) and the even higher, though still this-worldly (*saṅsāric*), realms in which there are no material qualities at all (the *arūpadhātu*).[15]

As for the distinction between the Buddha's ordinary physical body and his *dhammakāya*, the two most famous and interesting scriptural references are those which are contained in the Saṅyutta and Dīgha Nikāyas. According to the passage in the Saṅyutta Nikāya, which the commentary explicitly interprets as having reference to the *dhammakāya*, the Buddha spoke to a monk who had harbored an intense desire to see him in person as follows: "Hush, Vakkali! What is there in seeing this vile body of mine? He who seeth the dhamma, Vakkali, he seeth me: he who seeth me, O Vakkali, he seeth the dhamma. Verily, seeing the dhamma, Vakkali, one sees me; seeing me, one sees the dhamma."[16] In the passage in the Dīgha Nikāya it is affirmed that the monks can call themselves sons of the Buddha who are born from his mouth, who are born from the *dhamma*, who are transformed by the *dhamma*, who are inheritors of the *dhamma* because of his *dhammakāya* which correspond to a *brahmakāya* and his *dhamma* nature (*dhammabhūto*) which corresponds to a brahma nature.[17]

In the Pali commentaries the recognition of these three different Buddha bodies was maintained. Over against a number of other Buddhist schools which

developed more docetic views, the Theravadins continued to emphasize the reality and the importance of the Buddha's physical body as a body which had been produced by *kamma* which had been accumulated in previous lives and was subject to the same kind of intrinsic limitations which affected the bodies of other human beings. The canonical references to the Buddha's evocation of a *manomayakāya* and its direct correlation with *jhānic* attainments were reaffirmed, for example in Buddhagosha's authoritative manual, the *Path of Purification*.[18] As for the conception of a *dhammakāya*, it was both reaffirmed and quite explicitly identified with the attainment of the supraworldly path and the realization of *nibbāna*. For example, in the commentary on the Saṅyutta Nikāya passage quoted above this identification between the *dhammakāya* on the one hand and the eight stages of path attainment (the stream-winner, the once-returner, the non-returner, and the fully perfected saint along with the fruits of each) and *nibbāna* on the other is quite explicit.[19] Or, to cite another case in point, Buddhagosha explicitly itentifies the *dhammakāya* with the path interpreted as *sīla* (morality), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom), along with *vimutti* (emancipation equals *nibbāna*) and *vimittiñanadassana* (the knowledge of emancipation).[20] But in spite of the efforts at systematization which went on in many areas of Buddhist thought and symbolism during the period in which the classical commentaries were written, no attempt was made to integrate these three different conceptions within a single, more comprehensive interpretation.

When we turn to the later Theravada tradition, however, we do find a text in which a more comprehensive overview is presented. The text in question is an important fifteenth-century vernacular compendium entitled Saddharmaratnākaraya which was written by the Venerable Dhammadinnācariya Wimalakitti of the Palabātgala Forest Hermitage in Sri Lanka.[21] In the discussion of the Buddha bodies which appears in this work, the famous Sinhalese scholar utilizes somewhat different terminology than that which is found in the canon and commentaries, and he incorporates a number of new elements; nevertheless the interpretation which he presents is in direct continuity with the conceptions which were present in the classical Theravada sources.

The account in the Saddharmaratnākaraya begins by describing the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha as that body which befits the fourfold modes of living (postures such as walking, standing, sitting, and lying) and is perceived by all beings gifted with the physical eye; it goes on to note that the knowledge of it is beneficial to those unenlightened beings who do not possess the eye of wisdom. Proceeding then to a discussion of the *dhammakāya*, the account becomes more complex. On the one hand the text incorporates a Pali eulogy of the *dhammakāya* which identifies it with the full range of the Buddha's supranormal attainments and glory. However, in the main body of the Sinhalese discussion the Buddha's attainments are divided among three separate bodies—a more narrowly specified *dhammakāya*, a *nimittakáya* (a body which remains conditioned), and a *sūnyakāya* or emptiness body.

The *dhammakāya* in this more limited sense of the term is the body which is perceived by the wisdom eye possessed by those persons who are endowed with the *dharmātma* which brings happiness and dispels all evil. In the discussion which follows, this body is associated with the attainment of the eight *jhānas* (but not with the ninth, which implies the realization of the status of a non-returner or a fully perfected saint and brings cessation), with the five *abhiññas* or forms of mental science (but not the sixth which involves the destruction of the *āsavas* and coincides with the realization of the path at the level of a fully perfected saint), and with the four types of analytical knowledge (*catupaṭisambidhā*). Thus the *dhammakāya* in this more limited sense appears, in this new context, to be the direct successor of the *manomayakāya* of the canon and the commentaries.

The *nimittakāya*, according to the Saddharmaratnākaraya, is associated with the eight supraworldly stages of the path and the attainment of *nibbāna*. And thus it is directly continuous with the traditional conception of the *dhammakāya*, which was formulated in the passage in the Saṅyutta Nikāya commentary cited above. However, it should be noted that in this new context two parallel adjustments have taken place. On the one hand, the strictly supraworldly status of this third body has been somewhat compromised by associating all but the most exalted stages of the path with the divine realms in the Buddhist cosmological schema and by associating it with the divine eye which, in the traditional Theravada perspective, has the capacity to perceive beings within the cosmological hierarchy.[22] In a similar way the ultimacy of the *nibbāna* which is involved in the attainment of the *nimttakāya* has been somewhat tainted by specifically identifying it with the city of *sopādisesa nibbāna*—that is to say, the *nibbāna* in which certain remnants still persist.

Finally, this slight downward shift in the status of the third of the three bodies which the Saddharmaratnākaraya placed in relation to one another has necessitated the positing of a fourth body, the so-called *sūnyakāya* or emptiness body. According to description in the text, this *sūnyakāya* is, as we would expect, associated with the *anupādisesa nibbāna dhātu* in which absolutely nothing remains. It is a body which has no death or decay, is free from thirst, unimaginable, incomparable, intangible, inconceivable, devoid of all shapes, neither high nor low, neither short nor long, neither triangular nor square, uncountable, unlimited, devoid of color, invisible, immaterial, etc.

Thus we have in this late fifteenth-century Sinhalese work a comprehensive conception of the bodies of the Buddha which closely conforms to the traditions of Theravada orthodoxy. Although it differentiates out a fourth body, it is basically faithful to the canonical and commentarial conceptions of the physical body, the mind-made body, and the body which is constituted by the path and *nibbāna*. And despite the fact that it incorporates some of the Mahayanist tendencies which were involved in later. Theravada religion, it is faithful to the fundamental cosmological structure of the orthodox tradition. Thus the physical body correlates directly with the *kāmadhātu* or realm of desire, the *dhammakāya*

with the more exalted *rūpadhātu* (the realm with only a remnant of material factors) and *arūpadhātu* (the realm where there are no material factors), the *nimittakāya* with the supraworldly but still conditioned realm of the path and the city of *nibbāna*, and the *sūnyakāya* with the realization of the absolutely unconditioned *anupādisesa nibbāna*. It presents, in other words, a fully developed yet nevertheless thoroughly Theravadin conception of the physical and attainment bodies of the Buddha.

The attainment body(ies) in the yoga tradition

In our discussion of the notion of the Buddha bodies in relation to the orthodox tradition of Theravada soteriology we began by noting the presence, in the Pali canon, of two supraphysical, supranormal bodies of the Buddha, one designated by the term *manomayakāya* and the other designated by the term *dhammakāya*. In that context we assumed, in accordance with the general import of the canonical perspective and the more explicit testimony of the Pali commentaries and manuals, that we were being confronted with two distinct conceptions, one which was narrowly bound to the yogic element of *jhānic* realization as such and the other which was more specifically connected with conceptions of the Buddhist path. However there have been several interpreters of early Buddhism who have suggested that, at the outset at least, these two conceptions were for all practical purposes identical. For example, Maryla Falk, in her fascinating monograph on *Nama Rupa and Dharma Rupa*, has argued that in the precanonical Buddhist tradition the basic orientation was one in which—as in the Upanishadic-yogic perspective with which she closely associates it—the practice of the path was virtually equated with *jhānic* attainment.[23] In this proto-Buddhist tradition, Falk maintains, the emphasis was placed on the similarity between the *jhānic* Path, which the Buddha himself followed in his quest for enlightenment and *nibbāna*, and the path which was normative for his disciples. In addition, she maintains that this path was basically conceived as a reversal of the devolutionary process and that, despite the mild form of the *anattā* (no-self) doctrine with which it was associated in the Buddhist context, it presumed a relatively high degree of continuity between the *nāma-rūpa* (*saṅsāric*) realm and the absolute (*nibbāna*).

According to Falk's reconstruction of the precanonical tradition, *sīla* functioned as the necessary preparation for the path; *samādhi*, which was identified with the practice of the four *jhāna* and the attainment of the *manomayakāya/dhammakāya*, was equated with the path itself; and insight, which was conceived as the culmination of the path, was associated with the acquisition of a second supra-normal body which was designated as the *amatakāya* (ambrosia or immortality body). Similarly she argued that in the precanonical phase of the tradition the various stages of the path which were recognized (notably the stages of the returner, the stream-winner and the fully perfected saint) were identified with preparation for the path, with the actual

practice of the path and the acquisition of the *manomayakāya/dhammkāya*, and with the culmination of the path and the acquisition of the *amatakāya*. Thus, she contends, it was only in the later canonical phase of the tradition, after the path of the disciples had been distinguished from the Buddha path and after the monks had come to emphasize the exclusivist implications of the *anattā* doctrine, that a truly supraworldly path could be meaningfully distinguished from *jhānic* practice as such. It quite obviously follows that only then could the *dhammakāya* be meaningfully distinguished from the *manomayakāya*.[24]

Many objections can be raised concerning Falk's claim that she has identified a precanonical phase in the development of Buddhist soteriology and related conceptions of the bodies of the Buddha.[25] However, in this context I do not propose to emphasize this aspect of the situation, but rather to point to the positive fact that she has identified and documented a very interesting strand of the tradition which, even if it does not have any clear claim to chronological priority over the more orthodox orientation which we have discussed above, has left undeniable traces in the canonical texts. Having done this, I would like to go further by suggesting that this yogic perspective, in addition to being influential in the development of the specifically Mahayana conceptions concerning the bodies of the Buddha (this is the main theme on which Falk focused in her discussion) also reappears in the perspective of a group which existed on the fringes of the Theravada community during the later centuries of the second millenium A.D., primarily in northern Thailand but also in Sri Lanka. The existence of this group, whose members called themselves Yogāvacara clansmen, and the fact that it maintained a Buddhist orientation which has much in common with very ancient Brahmanic, Upanishadic, and Indian yogic traditions has already been noted by Louis Finot, F. W. Woodward, and George Coedès, as well as by Eliade himself.[26] Actually very little is known about the origins of the group, though the fact that it seems to have had its major center in northern Thailand suggests that it may have had connections with the Sanskritic Hinayana traditions which exerted an important influence in this area. Our knowledge of the historical relationships between this group and the broader Theravada community is also very meager, though in this connection it is certainly significant that various texts and traditions associated with the group have been preserved in specifically Theravada contexts.

The text which especially interests us here is called the Dhammakāya or Dhammakāyassa Atthavaṇṇanā and was found by Coedès in a Theravada anthology in Pali called the Suttajātakanidānānisaṅsa, copies of which are located in Bangkok and Pnom Penh.[27] In addition to a short but significant exordium and an introductory table of contents, this text consists of thirty segments, twenty-six of which identify twenty-six components of the Buddha's *dhammakāya* as twenty-six of the attainments associated with Buddhahood and four of which identify four elements of the Buddha's clothing (considered as an integral part of his *dhammakāya*) with four additional attainments of a similar kind. In some cases the specific equations which are made have a clear doctrinal significance

(for examples, see below). In some cases the specific equations which are made have a kind of obvious physiological appropriateness (e.g., the equations between the eye and various kinds of supranormal eyes, between the ear and the divine ear, and between the navel and the knowledge of codependent origination). In some cases the equations are made on the grounds of an exact or approximate numerical correspondence (e.g., those which are made between the teeth and the knowledge of the thirty-seven wings of enlightenment, between the supramundane and mundane types of knowledge and the lips, and between the ten calls to memory and the fingers). In other cases the equations seem to be based on the even more accidental grounds of a purely verbal congruence, for example, when the feet (*pāda*) are equated with the four bases of magical power (*iddhipāda*). And in still other cases the equations seem to be made simply to complete the body imagery and the listing of key attainments—for example, when the stomach is identified as the knowledge of the ten powers and the buttocks as the powers of the five faculties. But the key point for our purposes is that in this text the *jhānic* attainments and the supraworldly path attainments constitute a single *dhamma* body.

There is, of course, no simple identity between the early yogic interpretation of the bodies of the Buddha to which Falk has called our attention and the perspective which is reflected in the Dhammakāyassa Atthavaṇṇanā. Nevertheless they clearly represent two historically different expressions of the same basic view-point and share the same sort of middle ground between the more typically Theravada and Mahayana orientations. In the exordium to the later Yogāvacara text, for example, it is clearly stated that its contents should be remembered by the Yogāvacara clansmen who, being gifted with keen intelligence, desire to attain the status of an omniscient Buddha.[28] In this instance the text has gone significantly beyond the earlier yogic tradition by attributing omniscience to the Buddha and by recognizing it as an attainment to be imitated by those who follow the Buddhist path. But it is also true that the text strongly expresses the traditional Theravada perspective, which emphasizes that Buddhahood is the product of a series of attainments and makes no reference to the kind of ontological concerns and conceptions which are characteristic of Mahayana speculations.

Moreover, in the main body of the Dhammakāyassa Atthavaṇṇanā the continuity between the this-worldly realms of *nāma-rūpa* (*saṅsāra*), the supra-wordly path, and the goal is very much in evidence. In fact the conception of a single *dhammakāya* which not only encompasses the lesser attainments, the path attainments, and the goal, but also integrates them in terms of a very literally organic imagery, carries this emphasis considerably further than it was carried in the yogic tradition of the early period. However once again this Mahayanist thrust is kept very much in check. First of all, the text quite explicitly places the emphasis on the realization of the various components of the body through specific attainments and says nothing which might suggest that the *dhammakāya* as a whole has the kind of priority which it tends to acquire in the Mahayana

Sutras. Second, with the important exception of omniscience, the closely related knowledge of attaining the thunderbolt, and the visual fixation on the color blue, the particular attainments which are highlighted by the text are limited to the usual components of Theravada soteriology. And finally, the symbolism which is evident in the structuring of the text gives a preeminent place to the supra-worldly path conceived in terms of the stages of sainthood, and it clearly suggests that there is a direct correlation between that typically Theravada conception of the path and the realization of the highest goal(s); thus the change of lineage which involves entry into this supraworldly path is equated with the nose, the four basic stages of the path and the particular form of *jhānic* realization which is associated with them are equated with the forehead, the attainment of omniscience is equated with the skull, and the attainment of *nibbāna* is equated with the hair.[29]

As we have already indicated, it is impossible to trace direct historical connections, if in fact any existed, between the kind of yogic tradition which Falk identified in the early Buddhist milieu in India and the Yogāvacara tradition which was operative some 2,000 years later in Southeast Asia and perhaps in Sri Lanka as well. However, what can be affirmed is that these two traditions, each of which seems to have existed on the fringes of the Theravada community, advocated remarkably similar alternatives to the more orthodox perspective concerning the various bodies of the Buddha.

Concluding comments

The primary objective of the preceding study has been to demonstrate the presence and importance of various conceptions of the bodies of the Buddha in the Theravada tradition, not only in the canonical and commentarial periods, but in the later stages of its development in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia as well. In addition I have suggested that in order to develop an adequate interpretation of these Theravada conceptions it is necessary to make at least two basic distinctions. In the first place, the conceptions of the two bodies of the Buddha as Buddha legacies which provide the basis for the life of the historical Buddhist community (i.e., the *dhammakāya* as scripture and the *rūpākaya* as relic, reliquary stupa, or reliquary image) must be distinguished from conceptions of the bodies of the Buddha which have a more directly soteriological import. In other words, the kind of differentiation which the Theravadins have traditionally made between the Buddha as founder of the religion and the Buddha as the model for the salvation of his followers on the one hand, and between the *dhamma* as scripture and the *dhamma* as path and realization on the other, must be taken seriously into account in this context as well.[30] In the second place, within the specifically soteriological area an orthodox perspective must be differentiated from a more yogic strand of the tradition. In the more orthodox texts the supranormal bodies of the Buddha manifest attainments which are directly relevant to the disciples whose goal is to become fully perfected saints (thus the emphasis is

on the ***dhamma**kāya* of the Buddha), whereas in the less orthodox and more yogic strands of the tradition the supranormal bodies of the Buddha manifest attainments which are relevant to the disciples whose goal is to achieve a status which cannot be distinguished from Buddhahood itself (thus the emphasis is on the *dhammakāya* of the **Buddha**). Also, in the more orthodox texts the plurality of supranormal bodies is maintained in such a way that the differentiation between purely *jhānic* attainments and the practice of the *nibbānic* path as highlighted, whereas in the less orthodox and more yogic contexts there is a tendency to conflate the supranormal bodies and in so doing to emphasize the continuity between specifically yogic attainments and the attainments of the stream-winner, the once returner, the nonreturner, and the fully perfected saint.

With these two basic distinctions established, it should now be possible to push forward this kind of research in at least two mutually supportive ways. First of all, it should be possible, through the location and examination of additional texts which deal with the subject, to develop a much more nuanced and historical interpretation of the various types of *kāya* symbolism within the Theravada tradition itself. And what is perhaps even more important and interesting, it should also be possible to reconsider, from the new and very helpful vantage point which this research can provide, some of the complex historical and structural relationships between the religious perspective(s) of the Theravadins on the one hand and of the various Mahayana schools on the other.

Notes

1 Louis de LaVallée Poussin, "Notes sur les corps du Buddha," *La Muséon* (1913): 251–90; Nalinaksha Dutt, *Aspects of Mahayana Buddhism and Its Relation to Hinayana* (London: Luzac, 1930); Maryla Falk, *Nama-Rupa and Dharma-Rupa* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1943); D. T. Suzuki, *Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra* (London: Routledge, 1930); Paul Mus, "Buddha Paré," *Bulletin de l'école française Extrême-Orient* 28 (1928): 147–278; Paul Demieville, "Busshin," *Hobogirin*, fasc. 2 (Tokyo: Maison Franco-Japanaise, 1930); Nagao Gadjin, "On the Theory of Buddha-Body," *Eastern Buddhist*, n.s. 6, no. 1 (May 1973): 25–53. For other references to discussions see the section on "Bodies of the Buddha" in category 8 of my bibliography, *Guide to the Buddhist Religion*, which will be published by G. K. Hall in 1977.

2 Throughout this paper I have used the Pali forms of the Buddhist terms except in titles where Sanskrit appears in the original or in contexts, such as this sentence, where the Sanskrit form is obviously appropriate.

3 *Dīgha Nikāya* 6.6.1. Trans. adapted from that by T. H. Rhys Davids in *Buddhist Suttas*, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 11 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881), p. 112.

4 See, for example, the classic account in Étienne Lamotte's *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indian* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1958).

5 The topic is introduced by Sukumar Dutt in his work *Buddha and the Five After Centuries* (London: Luzac, 1957) and is treated in depth in Akira Hirakawa's article, "The Rise of Mahayana Buddhism and Its Relation to the Worship of Stupas," *Memoirs of the Research Department of Toyo Bunko*, 22 (1963): 57–106.

6 As we shall see, the term *dhammakāya* was already in use in the canon. However in the later context it is clear that the *dhammakāya* is being identified with the scriptural

legacy. See I. B. Horner, trans., *Milinda's Questions*, vol. 1, Sacred Books of the Buddhists, vol. 22 (London: Luzac, 1963), pp. 96–100 (= pp. 71–73 in the original), noting especially the comparison between the writing of the elder named Tissa and the teaching or *dhammakāya* of the Buddha which is made at the very outset of the discussion.

7 See S. Dutt, p. 101.

8 For a discussion of this latter development, see Ananda Coomeraswamy, "The Origin of the Buddha Image," *Art Bulletin* 9, no. 4 (June 1927): 287–328.

9 This development is discussed in some detail in my article on "The Many Lives of Buddha," in Reynolds and Capps, eds., *The Biographical Process: Essays in the History and Psychology of Religion*, Religion and Reason, vol. 11 (The Hague: Mouton, 1976).

10 For pictures of the coffin-like containers in which the scriptures were sometimes placed, see George Coèdes, *The Vajrayana National Library of Siam* (Bangkok, 1924), pls. 13 and 14.

11 The relevant article, which is entitled "The Holy Emerald Jewel," will appear in Bardwell Smith, ed., *Religion and Political Legitimation of Southeast Asia* (Chambersburg, Pa.: Wilson Books, in press).

12 *Nāmakāya* is another name which is sometimes used to designate this same body; see, for example, the *Mahānidāna Sutta* (Dīgha Nikāya 2).

13 Trans. by Willard Trask, Bollingen Series, vol. 55 (New York: Pantheon, 1958), p. 165.

14 Quotation from Robert Chalmers, trans., *Further Dialogues of the Buddha II*, Sacred Books of the Buddhists, vol. 6 (London: Oxford, 1927), p. 10.

15 The *manomayakāya* and particularly its role as a precursor to the Mahayana conception of the *sambhogakāya* is discussed by O. Stein in his "Notes on the Trikāya-Doctrine," *Jha Commemoration Volume: Essays on Oriental Subjects*, Poona Oriental Series, no. 39 (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1937). However it is interesting to note that in other discussions of the conception of the *kāyas* in the Pali and Theravada tradition its presence is not even recognized—see for example, Dutt's otherwise very helpful treatment in *Aspects*, pp. 97–102.

16 Samyutta Nikāya 3, 120—translation adapted from that provided by F. L. Woodward on p. 103 of the *Book of Kindred Sayings*, Pali Text Society Translation Series, no. 13 (London: Oxford, 1924).

17 Digha Nikaya 3, 84. In a parallel passage in the Majjima Nikāya (3, 29) the *dhamma* (*dhammakāya*) from which the disciples are born is directly contrasted with the physical body.

18 Bhikkhu Nanamoli, trans. (Colombo: R. Semage, 1960), pp. 443–45.

19 Säratthappakāsimī 2, 314.

20 Cited in Dutt, pp. 101–2. This way of expressing the identity of the *dhammakāya* with the path and *nibbāna* is utilized in other Hinayana traditions as well—see the references in Nagao Gadjin, "On the Theory of the Buddha Body," p. 27, n. 4. The identification of these five elements as the five supraworldly *kandhā* is noted by LaVallée Poussin in his *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, tome 4, Melanges chinois et bouddhiques, vol. 16 (Bruxelles, 1971), p. 297, n. 2.

21 An English paraphrase of the section on which the following discussion is based has been very kindly provided by the Venerable Dr. Henpitagedara Jnanavassa of the Vidyodaya University of Ceylon in a personal communication dated May 15, 1976.

22 The tendency to identify beings who have attained the path as deities seems to be a common feature in late Theravada religion as well as in certain Mahayana contents. For a discussion of another late Theravada example see Harry Shorto, "The Devata Sotapān: A Mon Prototype of the Thirty Seven Nats," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 31, no. 1 (1967): 127–41.

23 Falk, see esp. pt. 6, p. 297, no. 2.

24 It should be noted that Falk herself sees the distinction which developed as one between the *manomayakāya* and the *dhammakāya*-as-scripture. In her discussion she does not seriously take into account the distinction which we are identifying as the crucial one in the specifically soteriological context—namely, that which is made between the *manomayakāya* and the *dhammakāya* as supraworldly path (the latter being coupled with the attainment of *nibbāna*).

25 For a discussion of the validity of the precanonical hypothesis see Edward Conze, *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1968), pp. 10–12.

26 Finot, "Recherches sur la littérature laotienne," *Bulletin de l'école française Extréme-Orient* 17 (1917): 1–218; Woodward, trans., *Manual of a Mystic*, Pali Text Society Translation Series, no. 6 (London: H. Milford, 1916); Coedès, "Dhammakāya," *Adyar Library Bulletin* 22, nos. 3–4 (December 1956): 248–86; Eliade, pp. 194 ff.

27 Our discussion is based on the edition of the text which Coedès has produced from these two manuscripts and published in the *Adyar Library Bulletin*.

28 Coedès, p. 254.

29 In this text, as in the texts which are associated with the early yogic tradition, *jhānic* attainments are closely correlated with the attainment of the various stages of sainthood. However, it is also clear that in this Yogāvacara context, as in the mainstream of the Theravada tradition, the change of lineage which brings entrance into the path is recognized as a necessary prerequisite for the kind of *jhānic* practice which leads to the highest goal. This way in which the Theravadins have differentiated between ordinary *jhānic* practice and the special form of *jhānic* practice which is carried on by those who have entered into the path is discussed in considerable detail by Buddhagosha in his *Path of Purification*, p. 528–29. The reader who wishes to consult the text of the Dhammakāyassa Atthavaṇṇanā concerning the relationship of the supraworldly path and *jhānic* attainments should be alerted to the fact that the path understood in terms of the stages of sanctification is discussed under the heading of the fourth *jhāna* rather than under the heading of the four paths (in fact there is a section which begins with a reference to the four paths, but it deals with quite a different set).

30 The Mahayanist thrust which results from the failure to make or hold to this distinction between the *dhammakāya* as scriptural body and the supranormal body(ies) constituted by soteriological attainments is brilliantly explicated by Paul Mus at various points in his preface to *Barabudur: Esquisse d'une histoire du bouddhisme fondée sur la critique archeologique des textes* (Hanoi: École Française Extrême Orient, 1935).

30

ON THE PROBLEM OF THE RELATION OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE AND PHILOSOPHICAL THEORY IN BUDDHISM

Lambert Schmithausen

Source: Cultural Department of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany (ed.) (1973) *German Scholars on India*. New Delhi and Varanasi: Chowkhamba, pp. 235–50.

Everyone who has had at least some glimpses at Buddhism knows that it contains various philosophical theories as well as various spiritual practices. The term '*philosophical theory*' should be understood here in a general sense comprising any attempt to make rational statements about the true nature or the fundamental principles of the totality or some part of the existent, or about those aspects of it of which everyday experience is not aware. In this sense, philosophical theories in Buddhism are, e.g., the doctrine that there is no substantial Self, no *ātman*; or the doctrine that the whole universe consists of momentary factors, of factors each of which lasts only for the time of an extremely short moment. '*Spiritual practice*', in the case of Buddhism, consists essentially of moral or ethical exercises, and of practices of meditation, deep concentration, or trance. As an example, we may adduce the so-called four 'infinitudes', or 'unlimited ones' (*apramāṇa*), i.e. the meditative practice of the attitudes of friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and impartiality or equanimity with regard to all living beings. Another example is the 'contemplation of the impure' (*aśubhabhāvanā*). Here the Yogin, in order to subdue excessive covetousness, contemplates dead bodies in their different stages of decomposition. In this exercise, it is not necessary that the Yogin actually stays at a cemetery for the whole time. He may well continue the exercise at any other place, making use of a special meditative practice in which he is able to *visualize* those dead bodies he saw previously.

In this article I want to contribute to the solution of the problem of the *historical relation* of these two elements — philosophical theory and spiritual practice — in Buddhism. Did Buddhism usually start from philosophical theories and afterwards develop corresponding spiritual practices? Or is it more typical for

Buddhism that first there are spiritual practices and that philosophical theories are only the result of a subsequent reflection which leads to a theoretical consolidation and generalization of those spiritual practices?

Of course, spiritual practice seems hardly possible without any theoretical presupposition. Thus, also in Buddhism there are philosophical theories which no doubt can be traced back to the Buddha himself: the doctrine that earthly life and its constituents are essentially characterized by suffering (*duḥkha*), are to be evaluated negatively on account of their impermanence (*anityatā*); the doctrine that craving (*tṛṣṇā*) is the cause of sorrowful worldly existence; and the doctrine of transmigrational rebirth (*saṃsāra*) which rules out suicide as a remedy against suffering and necessitates spiritual efforts. However, it is not these original doctrinal presuppositions of Buddhism whose relation to spiritual practice I propose to discuss. For on the one hand, it would be rather difficult to reconstruct the intellectual or spiritual process which induced the Buddha to establish these doctrines. On the other hand, many elements of these theoretical presuppositions were inherited from older periods. The doctrine of transmigration, e.g., seems to emerge as early as the period of the Brāhmaṇas.[1] The doctrine that all earthly life is suffering is found already in the older Upaniṣads as the negative corollary of the discovery of the blissful nature of the Self (*ātman*)[2]; the Buddha merely presented this negative aspect in an emphasized and isolated form. And the doctrine that craving (*tṛṣṇā*) is the cause of rebirth which implies suffering, and that accordingly the termination of suffering presupposes the abandonment of craving, is foreshadowed by the Upaniṣadic doctrine that desire (*kāma*) decides one's destiny after death, and that he who is free from all kinds of desire becomes immortal and attains the Brahman[3].

Thus, the philosophical theories whose relation to spiritual practice I am going to discuss in this article are those which are exclusively Buddhist and which were freshly developed by Buddhism.

Of course, I am not the first to deal with this problem. But there is still much work to be done from the point of view of a strictly *historicophilological method*. In order to arrive at reliable results, one has to find out the oldest sources for each philosophical theory and to check the context in which the respective theory appears there. This, however, is rather difficult because the relevant materials are in most cases anonymous and present great difficulties to the construction of even a relative chronology. Moreover, large parts of Buddhist literature are lost; and what has remained, has been preserved in many cases only in the form of Tibetan and Chinese translations which are not always easy to understand.

Nevertheless, I think that there are cases in which it will be possible to arrive at tolerably reliable results. My aim is to demonstrate this in the case of the idealistic-spiritualistic philosophy of the *Yogācāra* school of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Let me first give a short survey of this philosophy: 1. From the epistemological point of view, the doctrine of the Yogācāras says that in every cognition or perception what is cognized or perceived is only an object-like mental

image but not a real object existing outside the mind. 2. From the viewpoint of metaphysics, according to the Yogācāras there are no material but only mental entities. The whole universe only consists of living beings that are constituted by nothing but mental factors. Each living being is a complex of eight different kinds of cognition or perception (*vijñāna*). Moreover, each of these eight cognitions is accompanied by a group of other mental entities that mainly belong to the emotional or volitional sphere, e.g. sensations of pleasure or pain, hatred or desire, good or bad intentions. All these mental factors exist only for the time of an extremely short instant (*kṣaṇa*), but there may be homogeneous chains or series of such instantaneous factors. 3. As has been said, all mental factors apprehend not real objects but merely a mental object-like image that is imprinted on them in the very moment of their origination. As for this objective content, the ordinary cognitions and perceptions that constitute the surface of the living being generally take it over from a subliminal, subconscious cognition called the *ālayavijñāna*. The objective contents of this *ālayavijñāna* consists of a mental image of the whole world and is determined by the former good and bad deeds (*karman*) of the respective living being. Thus, the whole world, especially the outer world, is only a subjective mental production of each living being. Our conviction to live in one and the same world is therefore merely an imagination based on the fact that there are certain common features in our *karman* which cause our *ālayavijñānas* to produce *similar* mental images of the outer world.[4] 4. It must be added, however, that for the Yogācāras even this manifold universe of fluctuating mental factors is only an imperfect or preliminary level of reality. In mystical intuition one can become aware of a deeper reality constituted by the so-called 'Suchness' or 'True Essence' (*tathatā*)[5] which is one, unchangeable and imperishable, and which represents the ontological aspect of *nirvāṇa*.

After this short sketch of the idealistic philosophy of the Yogācāras, we shall now proceed to a discussion of the question of its *origin*. Was the formation of Yogācāra idealism caused by *theoretical* problems? This is, e.g., the opinion of J. MASUDA who believes that it was developed in opposition to the absolute negativism of the Mādhyamikas[6]. Or did Yogācāra idealism — as E. CONZE thinks[7] — arise from certain practices of meditation, i.e. from *spiritual practice*?

As I have tried to prove in another article[8], the oldest materials of the Yogācāra school have been collected in the voluminous *Yogācārabhūmi*. In this text, as far as I can see, the idealistic-spiritualistic philosophy of later Yogācāras and its characteristic terms, *vijñaptimātra* and *cittamātra*, are not yet traceable. I found only one passage in which the text asserts that only the mind (*cittamātra*) exists really. But it is an opponent who is speaking in this passage, and moreover the statement is not, as usually, directed against the existence of real objects outside the mind but merely against the opinion that, besides the mind, we have to accept the existence of emotional and volitional mental factors[9].

In most of its parts, the Yogācārabhūmi obviously presupposes the realistic ontology of the traditional schools of Hīnayāna Buddhism which merely deny the existence of a substantial Self (*ātman*) whereas the reality of insubstantial

entities (*dharma*), mental *as well as material ones*, is not questioned[10]. There are, however, some portions of the Yogācārabhūmi — especially the chapters Bodhisattvabhūmi and Bodhisattvabhūmiviniścaya — where we meet with a kind of nominalistic philosophy according to which finite entities are mere denominations (*prajñaptimātra*)[11], or with a theory that considers objects or phenomena (*nimitta*) to be the product of false conceptions or disintegrating mental activities (*vikalpa*). But just the latter doctrine seems to imply that false conception produces things *really*, and not merely as mental images[12]. Only as compared with the absolute 'Suchness' (*tathatā*), both conceptions and their products are unreal[13]. Thus, these theories may be regarded as special forms of Mahāyānistic illusionism. They may be stages preparing Yogācāra idealism, but they are not yet idealism itself.

Another development preparatory to idealism which can be observed in the Yogācārabhūmi refers to the objects of meditative concentration (*samādhi*). Here again, we often meet with a *realistic* doctrine: the object-like images (*pratibimba*) visualized in meditation are constituted by a special kind of 'derivative matter' (*upādāyarūpa*) originating on the basis of the gross elements under the influence of a corresponding act of concentration (*manaskāra*) that can be produced in certain meditations (*samādhi*)[14]. This matter produced by meditation is characterized by the peculiarity that it can only be apprehended by the non-sensual cognition (*manovijñāna*) of meditation but not by sense perception, and that it does not offer resistance to the motion of ordinary material objects[15].

However, in the *Srāvakabhūmi* chapter the Yogācārabhūmi quotes an unknown Sūtra in which the purely *ideal* character of the object visualized by the meditating Yogin — e.g. repulsive things like decaying corpses — is at least seen as one possibility. The text says: "It is not the case that the very same real object [which the Yogin saw before and which he is now visualizing] has now actually come near to him and become perceptible so that he were able to see it really. Rather there arises for him a counterfeit of that object, or a reflected image of it, or merely a cognition or perception or recollection [of it][16]." It is, however, quite obvious that our text, by considering the possibility that *some* objects (viz. those perceived in visionary meditation) do not possess any reality apart from the subject's perception or visualizing recollection, does *not* yet propound universal idealism. The reality of *ordinary* objects is not called in question.

This is different in the case of the *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra* which seems to be the oldest, at least the oldest extant, Yogācarā text that clearly expresses universal idealism. The *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra* is obviously earlier than the Yogācāra treatises ascribed to 'Maitreya-(nātha)' and Asaṅga[17]. It must have been compiled even before the completion or final redaction of the Yogācārabhūmi. But it contains many materials which clearly represent a later stage of development than most parts of the Yogācārabhūmi, esp. than the Bodhisattvabhūmi and the Śrāvakabhūmi[18]. This is especially true for the eighth chapter of the *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra* in which the question is raised whether the images which are the

objects of meditation (*samādhigocarapratibimba*) are different from the mind (*citta*) or not. The answer is that they are *not* different from the mind because they are nothing but cognition (*vijñaptimātra*)[19]. The text tries to confirm this thesis by referring to a former utterance of the Buddha that "mind (*vijñāna* = *citta*) is characterized by [being] mere cognition of the objec (*— *ālambanavijñaplimātraprabhāvita*)[20]". This statement reminds us of the Abhidharma doctrine that the mind (*vijñāna*) simply cognizes or makes known the object as a whole, whereas the other mental factors (sensation etc.) apprehend or accentuate special aspects of the object[21]. But, of course, as a proof for the ideality of the objects of meditation the statement holds good only if it is understood in quite a different sense: in the sense that the mind is characterized by [the fact that its] object is nothing but cognition, that its object has no existence apart from the subjective act or event of cognition. Thus, the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra seems to be the first text to use, in an idealistic sense, the expression *vijñaptimātra* which was to become the most used and most typical term of Yogācāra idealism.

Moreover, already in the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra the use of the term is not limited to objects of meditation. Like the Abhidharmic theory of which it seems to be a transformation, the statement that mind (*vijñāna*) is characterized by the fact that its object is nothing but cognition contains no restriction. Accordingly, the following paragraph of the text raises the question whether the statement is valid also for *ordinary* objects. This question is answered in the affirmative: even the ordinary objects are not different from the mind, are nothing but cognition (*vijñaptimātra*)[22].

As we have seen, the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra starts from the ideality of meditation-objects (which had already been articulated by the Sūtra quoted in the Śrāvākabhūmi) and then simply extends this fact to ordinary objects, without justifying this procedure by any rational argument. Thus, the result of our examination of the oldest materials of the Yogācāra school clearly speaks in favour of the theory that Yogācāra idealism primarily resulted from a *generalization* of a fact observed in the case of meditation-objects, i.e. in the context of *spiritual practice*.

However, there may arise two questions: Firstly, what was the *motive* for such a generalization? Secondly, how was such a generalization *possible*, how could it be professed with some chance of catching on?

As for the *motive*, no clue can be found in the Śrāvakabhūmi passage where we found a first expression of the idea of the mere ideality of meditation-images. For according to this text, what is to be achieved by the meditation on these object-like images is the direct realization of the object *itself*[23], the most prominent object being the Four Holy Truths. However, besides this 'Hīnayānistic' practice, in other chapters of the Yogācārabhūmi, esp. in the Bodhisattvabhūmiviniścaya[24], we meet with a more 'Māhāyanistic' meditation practice which also proceeds from object-like images but sees liberating knowledge in a completely *transphenomenal* spiritual state[25]. According to this practice, the Yogin cultivates the object-like images only in order to *eliminate* them subsequently

and thus to get rid also of the ordinary phenomena for which they were substituted[26]. Now, the elimination of the object-like images offered no problem, especially if — as a few passages of the Bodhisattvabhūmiviniścaya actually indicate[27] — the images visualized in meditation have only an ideal existence. In the case of ordinary objects, however, there arose difficulties. Once the transphenomenal state implying their disappearance was considered not only to be spiritually effective but also to reveal a higher level of *reality*, the elimination even of ordinary phenomena was believed somehow to take place *really*. Of course, this seems impossible if ordinary phenomena are conceived of as ultimately real things. It becomes, however, quite plausible if, like the images visualized in meditation, the ordinary objects also had only an ideal existence, and this is exactly what the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra affirmed. Thus, the generalization of the ideality of meditation-objects into universal idealism was motivated by the urge of making more plausible the spiritual practice of eliminating all objective phenomena by supplying it with a corresponding metaphysical basis. In fact, immediately after having stated the ideality not only of meditation-images but also of ordinary objects, the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra proceeds to a description of the spiritual process which, through the insight into the fact that the objective images perceived in meditation are nothing but cognition (*vijñaptimātra*), leads to the realization of the transphenomenal Absolute Reality (*tathatā*)[28]. Also in the Yogācāra works of 'Maitreya (nātha)'[29], it is especially in the context of this meditative practice that we find the doctrine of the ideality of objects.

As for the historical *possibility* of such a generalization of the ideality of the objects of meditation, we must see it against the background of *Mahāyānistic illusionism* which, of course, is much older than the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra which can hardly be earlier than the end of the 3rd century A.D. Now, as we have seen above, special forms of Māhāyanistic illusionism are also found in certain parts of the Yogācārabhūmi. Especially the Bodhisattvabhūmiviniścaya chapter clearly expresses the ultimate unreality of all phenomena (*nimitta*) when it compares their disappearance with the awaking from a dream.[30] This ultimate unreality of objects is due to the fact that they are produced by false conception or disintegrating mental activities (*vikalpa*). But, as we have heard above, the text obviously takes this production to be a *real* one (not ultimately real, of course, but real in the sense of an entity existing outside the mind). Accordingly, the text clearly distinguishes between the ontological status of ordinary objects and that of the object-like images perceived in meditation: The first are told to proceed from *former* false conceptions *and* from [other] *objects*, whereas the latter are merely imagined (*parikalpita*) and manifested only by a corresponding concentration of interest (*adhimokṣa*) but not really existent[31] Compared with this semi-realistic illusionism of the Bodhisattvabhūmiviniścaya, at least in the context of the metaphysical foundation of the spiritual practice described above, the frank idealism of the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra constitutes a decisive advance.

For the articulation of this idealism, also the 'nominalism' of the Bodhisattvabhūmi (which is also found in the Bodhisattvabhūmiviniścaya) does not seem

to have been without influence. It is surely not a mere accident that the characteristic term of this 'nominalism' — which describes all finite entities as nothing but denomination (*prajñaptimātra*) — is strikingly similar to the term *vijñaptimātra* used by the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra to define all objects as nothing but cognition, i.e. as merely ideal. Moreover, a link between these two stages of development seems to be preserved in a passage of the Bodhisattvabhūmiviniścaya chapter of the Yogācārabhūmi. In this passage, the thesis that things arise in dependence on speech is illustrated by a reference to the object-like images (**jñeyavastusabhāgapratibimba*) whose form is determined by the speech-coloured concentration of thought (**jalpamanaskāra*) of the meditating Yogin[32]. On the analogy of this parallelism of meditation-objects and ordinary objects as regards their dependence on speech, it was only a small step to assert the *ideality* also of ordinary objects if the object-like images of meditation are considered to have only an ideal existence[33]. Since this latter fact is expressly stated already in the Bodhisattvabhūmiviniścaya passage referred to above which characterizes the object-like images of meditation as "belonging to the mental series" (**citta-santānaparyāpanna*)[34], the transition to universal idealism in the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra was quite natural.

Perhaps still more important is the fact that even a clearly idealistic formulation of Māhāyanistic illusionism was already existent at the time of the composition of the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra. Although the Māhāyanistic Sūtras in which this formulation occurs can hardly be attributed to the Yogācāra school in the strict sense, at least one of them, the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, exercised considerable influence on it. This Sūtra is referred to already in the Bodhisattvabhūmi chapter of the Yogācārabhūmi[35], and was translated into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa as early as the last decade of the 3rd century A.D.[36] Thus it is doubtlessly older than the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra which in fact, also in the 8th chapter[37], adopts its theory of the ten stages of a Bodhisattva.

Now, in the 6th chapter of the Daśabhūmikasūtra we find the following sentence: "This here, viz. the whole world consisting of the three spheres [of (sexual) desire, (corporeal) matter (without sexual desire), and immateriality], is nothing but mind (*cittamātram idaṃ yad idaṃ traidhātukam*)[38]". What is most interesting for our present subject is the fact that this statement is *not* immediately connected with the description of or reflection on a special practice of meditation (*samādhi*), but occurs in a description of several aspects of 'dependent origination' (*pratītyasamutpāda*) on which the Bodhisattva should reflect at this stage, i.e. in an essentially *theoretical* context. However, in this description of dependent origination in the Daśabhūmikasūtra the assertion of universal idealism appears to be quite *isolated* and *unmotivated*. The following as well as the preceding sentences presuppose the traditional realistic ontology[39]. In the present paper, I cannot enter into a detailed discussion of the passage. As far as I can see, either the paragraph containing the statement that this whole world is only mind is hardly more than a rather arbitrary compilation of a few well-known but heterogeneous materials under the heading of mind (*citta*) as the central and

decisive factor in dependent origination; or — if there be any coherence in the text — the statement that this whole world is only mind (*cittamātra*) must be interpreted as directed *not* against the existence of real *objects* but against the existence of a substantial *Self* (*ātman*). A use of the term "nothing but mind" (*cittamātra*) in this sense is traceable also in other texts[40], and even occurs in Vasubandhu's commentary on the Daśabhūmikasūtra in connection with the following sentence of the Sūtra[41]. Nevertheless, even in this case the statement that the whole world is nothing but mind appears to be a somewhat unusual expression if the text merely wants to deny the existence of a substantial Self. Thus, in any case it seems that it was not in the Daśabhūmikasūtra that the sentence which describes the world as being nothing but mind was formulated for the first time.

In fact, the sentence occurs also in at least one other old Mahāyānaṣūtra, namely the Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthitasamādhisūtra[42], also called *Bhadrapālasūtra, which was translated into Chinese by Lokakṣema as early as 179 A.D.[43], i.e. more than one hundred years before the Daśabhūmikasūtra.

As the longer title of this Sūtra shows, its main subject is a special kind of visionary meditation in which the Yogin sees himself face to face with any Buddha of the present time, especially with Amitābha or Amitāyus, the Buddha who resides in the western paradise Sukhāvatī. In the third chapter[44] of this Sūtra, these apparitions of the Buddha visualized in meditation are compared with dream visions, with reflected images, and with the decaying corpses and skeletons visualized in the 'contemplation of the impure' (*aśubhabhāvanā*). Just as these imaginary appearances, the Buddhas visualized in meditative concentration, are also not really met by the meditating Bodhisattva but only projections of the Bodhisattva's mind; and what the Bodhisattva should realize is precisely this fact that the visualized Buddha is nothing but mind (*cittam eva*)[45].

This ideality of the meditation-images, however, has to be extended to *all* phenomena: Just as a man, awaking from a dream, comprehends that all phenomena are illusory like dream visions[46], in the same way the reflection of the Bodhisattva who understands that in his meditation he did not really meet the Buddha culminates in the intuition of universal ideality: "This whole world consisting of the three spheres is nothing but mind (*cittamātram idaṃ* [*yad idaṃ?*] *traidhātukam*). And why? Because [I see in the case of meditation that] it appears just as I imagine.[47]"

Thus, in contrast to the Daśabhūmikasūtra, in the Bhadrapālasūtra the statement that the whole world is only mind (*cittamātra*) occurs in a context which perfectly corresponds to the idealistic sense suggested by its wording. Moreover, the statement is well introduced here and appears as the culminating point of a series of detailed preparatory reflections. As far as I can see, such a coherent exposition of the idealistic thesis that the world is nothing but mind (*cittamātra*) does not occur in any other of the early Mahāyānasūtras. This fact, in combination with the earliest *terminus ante quem* of our Sūtra, suggests that the Bhadrapālasūtra was the first text to enunciate the thesis of universal idealism

and to express this by the term *cittamātra*. If this is true, our investigation of the pertinent old Mahāyānasūtras has led to the same result as our examination into the proper Yogācāra texts: to the result that the thesis of universal idealism originated from the *generalization* of a situation observed in the case of objects visualized in meditative concentration, i.e., in the context of *spiritual practice*.

However, the motivation of this generalization seems to differ slightly from that of the old Yogācāra sources. In the Bhadrapālasūtra, it is obviously Mahāyānistic illusionism that constitutes the direct and proper motive. It seems that it is only for the sake of introducing into universal illusionism that the Sūtra emphasizes the unreality of the apparitions of the Buddha visualized in meditative concentration for, on account of their high dignity, they must have been a most impressive object of demonstration. But the fact that our Sūtra articulates the final enunciation of universal illusionism in terms of *idealism* is obviously due to its proceeding from a meditation practice; for it is the mind (*citta* or *cetas*) that is considered to be the centre and source of meditative processes[48].

But in spite of this terminological peculiarity, we must not lose sight of the fact that the Bhadrapālasūtra merely intends to introduce into the unreality of phenomena and not to establish the mind as a higher reality. This is clear from the concluding verses where the Sūtra, after having enunciated its thesis that the Buddha visualized in meditation is nothing but mind and perceived only by the mind (i.e. that in this case mind perceives nothing but itself), adds the following words: "[But] the mind cannot cognize the mind, the mind cannot perceive the mind[49]." For, as another Sūtra says, just as with the blade of a sword one cannot cut that very same blade, in the same way by one's mind one cannot perceive this very same mind (i.e. one instant of mind cannot perceive itself)[50]. Thus, even the notion of mind (as something real) is only ignorance and has to be abandoned[51]. The reduction of objects to the mind is thus merely a preliminary step towards the intuition of complete Emptiness[52].

This aspect is emphasized in some other old Mahāyānasūtras[53]. It is also clearly set forth in the Yogācāra works of 'Maitreya(nātha)'[54] who emphasizes that the transition from the apprehension that there is only mind or cognition to the intuition of the transphenomenal Absolute includes, as an intermediate stage, the apprehension that even the notion of mere mind or cognition has to be abandoned[55] (and it does not seem to be merely an accident that in his presumably oldest work — the Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra — 'Maitreyanātha' uses the term *cittamātra*[56], and not *vijñaptimātra*). In fact, both the old Mahāyānasūtras and the Mahāyānistic Yogācāra texts aim at a completely transphenomenal mystical experience compared with which even the notion of mind can only be a preliminary stage that has to be transcended in the end. It was probably the influence of their Hīnayānistic heritage that induced the Yogācāras to transform the exceptional position that mind possessed in the context of *spiritual* practices into a positive *ontological* pre-eminence over the objects, and to rebuild, on this level of idealism, a detailed system fully equivalent to that of Hīnayānistic Abhidharma.

Summarizing the results of our preceding investigation, we may retain the following: Specifically idealist formulations defining all phenomena as being nothing but mind (*cittamātra*) or cognition (*vijñaptimātra*) obviously made their first appearance in connection with reflections on objects of visionary meditation. Their generalization, however, was essentially motivated or made possible by the historical background of Mahāyānistic illusionism describing all finite entities or notions as empty (*śūnya*)[57], unreal (*asaṃvidyamāna* etc.)[58], and illusory, comparable to magic (*māyopama*) or to a dream (*svapnopama*), etc.[59]. There are even some formulations of illusionism that may be called to be halfway towards idealism because they describe the illusory nature of phenomena by derivating them from *mental* activities which, however, in contrast to the mind (*citta*), expressly imply *falseness* (and it is only this falseness that is emphasized). E.g., a passage of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā says that all entities are not really existent but only imagined (*kalpita*)[60]. And even in the 3rd chapter of the Bhadrapālasūtra we read in the concluding verses: "All these phenomena are without substance (*asāra*), arisen from vain thinking (*manyanā*)[61]." Thus, the investigation of the origin of Yogācāra idealism would entail an examination into the origins of Mahāyānistic illusionism. Such an examination would, however, exceed the limits of the present article.

Abbreviations

AKBh	=	Abhidharmakośabhāṣya of Vasubandhu, ed. P. PRADHAN, Patna 1967.
Aṣṭ	=	Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, ed. P. L. VAIDYA, Darbhanga 1960.
BhPS	=	*Bhadrapālasūtra = Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthitasamādhisūtra, Peking-Kanjur, Mdo, vol. Du, fol. 1–73 a 5.
BoBh	=	Bodhisattvabhūmi, ed. U. WOGIHARA, Tokyo 1930–1936.
BThI	=	E. CONZE, Buddhist Thought in India, London 1962.
DBhS	=	Daśabhūmikasūtra, ed. P. L. VAIDYA, Darbhanga 1967.
GPh	=	E. FRAUWALLNER, Geschichte der indischen Philosphie, I, Salzburg 1953.
Lit. Y.	=	L. SCHMITHAUSEN, Zur Literaturgeschichte der älteren Yogācāra-Schule. Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Supplementa I, Wiesbaden 1969, pp. 811–823.
NVinSg	=	L. SCHMITHAUSEN, Der Nirvāṇa-Abschnitt in der Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī der Yogācārabhūmi. Wien 1969.
SA	=	Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra, ed. S. LEVI, Paris 1907.
Saṃdh	=	Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra, ed. E. LAMOTTE, Louvain-Paris 1935.
ŚrBh-M	=	Śrāvakabhūmi manuscript, available to me thanks to the kindness of Prof. ASKARI, former director of the K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute in Patna, and of Prof. H. BECHERT and Dr. G. ROTH, Indological Seminar of the University of Göttingen.
T	=	Taisho-ed. of the Chinese Tripiṭaka.

Tj = Tanjur, Peking-ed.
Y = Yogācārabhūmi, ed. V. BHATTACHARYA, Calcutta 1957.
Y-T = Tibetan translation of the Yogācārabhūmi, Tj., Semstsam, vols. Dzi – Yi.

Notes

1 GPh. p. 50.
2 Cf. Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad III, 4, 2: *ato 'nyad ārtam.*
3 Cf. ib. IV, 4, 5–7.
4 Cf. Hsüan-tsang, Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi (T 1585), p. 10 c 12 ff. (transl. DE LA VALLEE POUSSIN p. 135 ff.).
5 Cf. NVinSg, pp. 105 ff.
6 JIRYO MASUDA, Der individualistischer Idealismus der Yogācāra-Schule (Heidelberg 1926), p. 25.—More recently e.g. R. H. ROBINSON, The Buddhist Religion (Belmont/California, 1970), p. 70.
7 BThI, pp. 251 ff.
8 Lit. Y., pp. 819 ff.
9 Y-T Zi 80 b 2 ff., cf. Lit. Y., pp. 820 f., esp. note 46. — The occurrences of the term *vijñaptimātra(tā)* in the Bodhisattvabhūmiviniścaya chapter of the Yogācārabhūmi (see Y-T Ḥi 74 b 7 f. etc.) are not taken into account here because they belong to a complete quotation of the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra (cf. Lit. Y., p. 822) which will be discussed below.
10 Cf. e.g. A. WAYMAN, Analysis of the Śrāvakabhūmi Manuscript (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1961), p. 174, first seven lines of the *Commentary* (read *paramārthaḥ / tadadhikārāt paramārthagāthāḥ /*, and *niśceṣṭā* instead of *niṣveṣṭā*): only *pudgalanāiratmya*, but *dharmāstitva;* Y-T Zi 15 b 5 ff. (cf. also Lit. Y., pp. 817 f.): ontological coordination of mind and matter.
11 Cf. BoBh 43, 27, etc.
12 Cf. e.g. Y-T Zi 304 a 4–6: objects arise from *former* false conceptions *and* from [other] *objects;* cf. also BoBh 52, 24 f.
13 Cf. e.g. Y-T Ḥi 18 a 5 ff.
14 Cf. e.g. Y-T Zi 229 ḅ 8 ff. and 214 b 2; cf. also AKBh 197, 4 ff.
15 Cf. e.g. Y-T Zi 214 b 3–5.
16 ŚrBh-M 8A.5–6c f.: *sa na tad eva jñeyaṃ vastu samavahitaṃ sammukhībhūtaṃ* (corr. acc. to f. 8A. 4–3a) *paśyaty, api tu tatpratirūpakam asyotpadyate, tatpribhāsam vā jñānamātram vā darśanamātram vā pratismrtimātram vā.* – Syntactically, the passage is not unambiguous. But although the Tibetan translation and the Chinese translation give different interpretations, I am rather sure that we have to understand it simply according to the pattern "... A (vā) verb B vā C vā D vā, etc.", like *tac ca tenạ pūrvam eva dṛṣṭam vā bhavati, śrutam vā matam vā vijñātam vā* in the preceding sentence of the text. — Cf. also JOSHO NOZAWA, Daijo-bukkyo Yuga-gyo no Kenkyū (Kyoto 1957), pp. 36 ff.
17 E.g., the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra is obviously presupposed already by SA XIX, 44 a-b and Madhyāntavibhāga III, 14 which cannot be understood without knowing Saṃdh VIII, 20, 2.
18 Lit. Y., pp. 822 f.
19 Saṃdh VIII, 7 (pp. 90, 33–91, 3); NOZAWA, op. cit. (note 1, p. 240), pp. 191 ff.; cf. also Saṃdh VIII, 9. (p. 92, 11–13).
20 Saṃdh VIII, 7 (p. 91, 4 f.): *rnam par śes pa'i* (read: *pa ni* [cf. NVinSg, p. 110, note w]) *dmigs pa rnam par rig pa tsam gyis rab tu phye ba yin no zes ṅas bśad do.*

21 Cf. e.g. Y 59, 16; Yaśomitra, Abhidharmakośavyākhyā (ed. WOGIHARA), p. 142; L. DE LA VALLEE POUSSIN, Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi, pp. 296 f.
22 Saṃdh VIII, 8.
23 ŚrBh-M 8B. 5–1 (b/c): ... *sarvadauṣṭhulyānāṃ pratipraśrabdher āśrayapariśuddhim anuprāpnoti* ..., *jñeyavastupratyakṣatayā* (ms. wrongly *-pratyavekṣatayā*) *ca ālambanapariśuddhim;* ŚrBh 8B. 4–2(b/c): ... *pratibimbam atikramya tasminn eva jñeye vastuni nirvikalpaṃ pratyakṣaṃ jñānadarśanam utpadyate.*
24 Although the final redaction of this chapter must be later than that of the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra (cf. Y-T Ḥi 47 b 7 ff. [quotation of the whole Saṃdh] and 20 a 5 f.[= Saṃdh VI, 10]), many materials contained in it obvioustv reflect a stage of development slightly earlier than that of Saṃdh VIII.
25 Cf. Y-T Ḥi 15 a 8 and b 4.
26 Cf. Y-T Zi 236 b 1 f. and Ḥi 15 b 2–4.
27 Cf. notes 4, p. 243 and 1, p. 244.
28 Saṃdh VIII, 9 (esp. p. 92, 11–13).
29 Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra, Dharmadharmatāvibhāga, and Madhyāntavibhāga.
30 Y-T Ḥi 15 b 8 ff. (cf. NVinSg. p. 109).
31 Y-T Ḥi 4 b 2 f.
32 Y-T Hi 23 b 8 ff.
33 Cf. Mahāyānasaṃgraha (ed. LAMOTTE) II, 14 (4 a) and 14 [b] (d) where the present Yogācārabhūmi passage is actually remodelled into a proof for *idealism*.
34 However, the pertinent words of the Tibetan (*sems kyi rgyud du gtogs pa'i*) have no equivalent in the Chinese translation.
35 BoBh 332, 20 ff.
36 Cf. e. g. R. YŪKI, Yuishiki-gaku Tenseki-shi (Tokyo 1962), p. 7.
37 Saṃdh VIII, 35.
38 DBhS 32, 9 (ed. RAHDER, p. 49; ed. KONDO, p. 98); cf. also DBhS, *gāthā* portion, VI, 16 a: *te cittamātra ti traidhātukam otaranti.* — The passage has been discussed esp. by Japanese scholars, cf. e. g. YUKI'O SAKAMOTO, Kegon-kyogaku no Kenkyū (2nd ed. Tokyo 1964), pp. 353 ff.; MITSUYOSHI SAIGUSA, Pratītyasamutpāda and Cittamātra (in: Kegon-shiso, ed. by K. KAWADA and H. NAKAMURA, 2nd ed. Tokyo 1968), pp. 235 ff.; KOSHIRO TAMAKI, Pursuit of Cittamātra (also in: Kegon-shiso ...), pp. 336 ff. [all in Japanese]. I intend to substantiate my different interpretation of the passage on another occasion.
39 Cf. e.g. DBhS 32, 11 f.: *yasmin vastuni rāgasaṃyuktam cittam utpadyate, tad vijñānam. vastu* <*saṃskārah* (see KONDO-ed.).> *saṃskāre saṃmoho* (see KONDO-ed.) '*vidyā*. Of course, any unbiassed reader will understand the *vastu* as a *real* thing.
40 Cf. e.g. Abhidharmasamuccaya (ed. PRADHAN, Santiniketan 1950), p. 34, 20–23 (read *saṃprayogaviprayogaṃ jānāti* and *cety abhiniveśaṃ*); Sthiramati, Sūtrālaṅkāravṛttibhāṣya, Tj., Sems-tsam, vol. Tsi, f. 123 a 8 f.; cf. also Laṅkāvatārasūtra, ed. NANJIO, p. 80, 7: *svacittamātram idaṃ traidhātukam ātmātmīyarahitam.*
41 Tj., Mdo-tshogs, Ni 254 a 5 f.: *srid pa'i yan lag rnams bdag daṅ bral ba'i sems tsam* (= **ātmarahita-cittamātra*) *la brten nas* (v. l. [Tj., Mdo-tshogs, Ji 86 a 3]: *brten pas na*) *sems gcig la brten pa'i phyir te.*
42 Cf. SAKAMOTO, op. cit. [note 1, p. 245], pp. 346 ff.
43 Cf. BAGCHI, Le canon bouddhique en Chine, vol. I, p. 40.
44 BhPS 11 a 7 – 15 b 7.
45 BhPS 15 b 4 f.
46 BhPS 14 a 1; my interpretation of the passage follows the Chinese versions.
47 BhPS 15 b 1 f.: *khams gsum po di dag ni sems tsam mo // de ci'i phyir ze na / 'di ltar bdag ji lta ji ltar rnam par rtog pa de lta de ltar snaṅ ṅo //.*
48 Cf. NVinSg. p. 86, esp. note d.

49 BhPS 15 b 6; cf. already Aṣṭ. 76, 4.
50 Ratnacūḍasūtra, quoted Śikṣāsamuccaya (ed. BENDALL) p. 235, and Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā (ed. VAIDYA) p. 188, 24–26.
51 Cf. BhPS 15 b 6.
52 Cf. BhPS 13 b 3 f. (*śūnyatāsamādhi* as the true meditation on the Buddha), and perhaps 15 b 7 (*rlom sems de 'dir stoṅ pa yin*).
53 E. g. T 815, p. 788 b 27 ff. and 789 a 27 ff. (cf. SAKAMOTO, op. cit. [note 1, p. 245], pp. 347 f.); T 1509, p. 118 a 1 f. (cf. SAIGUSA, op. cit. [note 1, p. 245], p. 247.
54 See note 2, p. 243.
55 Cf. e.g. SA VI, 8; XIV, 26–27.
56 Cf. e.g. SA VI, 7; XIV, 24.
57 Cf. e.g. Aṣṭ 156, 29; 198, 18; 224, 26; BThI, p. 220.
58 Cf. e.g. Aṣṭ 8, 9; 230, 32 f.; cf. also 165, 15 f.
59 Cf. e.g. Aṣṭ 20, 14 f.; BThI, p. 222.
60 Aṣṭ 8, 9.
61 BhPS 15 b 6.

31

BUDDHIST MODERNISM AND THE RHETORIC OF MEDITATIVE EXPERIENCE*

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What we can't say we can't say and we can't whistle either.
Frank Ramsey

Summary

The category "experience" has played a cardinal role in modern studies of Buddhism. Few scholars seem to question the notion that Buddhist monastic practice, particularly meditation, is intended first and foremost to inculcate specific religious or "mystical" experiences in the minds of practitioners. Accordingly, a wide variety of Buddhist technical terms pertaining to the "stages on the path" are subject to a phenomenological hermeneutic—they are interpreted as if they designated discrete "states of consciousness" experienced by historical individuals in the course of their meditative practice.

This paper argues that the role of experience in the history of Buddhism has been greatly exaggerated in contemporary scholarship. Both historical and ethnographic evidence suggests that the privileging of experience may well be traced to certain twentieth-century Asian reform movements, notably those that urge a "return" to *zazen* or *vipassanā* meditation, and these reforms were profoundly influenced by religious developments in the West. Even in the case of those contemporary Buddhist schools that do unambiguously exalt meditative experience, ethnographic data belies the notion that the rhetoric of meditative states functions ostensively. While some adepts may indeed experience "altered states" in the course of their training, critical analysis shows that such states do not constitute the reference points for the elaborate Buddhist discourse pertaining to the "path." Rather, such discourse turns out to function ideologically and performatively—wielded more often than not in the interests of legitimation and institutional authority.

Few would question the pivotal role the category "experience" has played in the modern study of religion. There would appear to be widespread agreement among both phenomenologists and historians of religion that the meaning of many religious doctrines, symbols, and rituals is to be sought in the experiences they evoke in the minds of practitioners. Moreover, a particular mode (or modes) of experience, characterized as "religious," "spiritual," or "mystical," is seen by many to constitute the very essence of religion; indeed, the great traditions are often traced back to the "originary experiences" of their founders. It might then seem surprising that so many of the scholars who privilege the category "experience" in the study of religion are apparently hesitant to subject this term to rigorous critical analysis. Even those whose interests lie in the investigation of so-called religious or mystical experience typically devote their efforts to the elucidation of the qualifiers "religious" and/or "mystical," evincing little interest in the analysis of the epistemic commitments entailed in the rhetoric of experience per se.

The notion that the referent of the term "experience" is self-evident betrays a set of specifically Cartesian assumptions, according to which experience is held to be immediately present to consciousness. It would appear that the phenomenological transparency of consciousness—what Richard Rorty has called the "glassy essence" or "mirror of nature" picture of mind (Rorty 1979)—is reproduced in the conceptual transparency of the category "experience," obviating the need for definitional precision or critical analysis.

The strategy of privileging experience on the one hand, while leaving the term unexamined on the other, has proven particularly opportune to those who envision their mission as one of combating the pernicious and ever-present threat of reductionism in the study of religion. By situating the locus of religious signification in phenomenological "inner space," religion is securely sequestered beyond the compass of empirical or social-scientific modes of inquiry. Wayne Proudfoot, who has undertaken an extensive analysis of this particular exegetical strategy, has argued that the category "religious experience" is of relatively recent provenance, and that it was "motivated in large measure by an interest in freeing religious doctrine and practice from dependence on metaphysical beliefs and ecclesiastical institutions" (Proudfoot 1985: xiii). As a consequence of the desire to shield religion from secular critique, the modern study of religion was thought to require the development of specialized hermeneutical tools sensitive to the irreducible experiential foundation of religious phenomena. (This argument has proven particularly popular when legitimizing the existence of departments of religion in publicly funded universities and colleges.)

The categories of religious experience in general, and mystical experience in particular, were especially influential in the construction of the sub-field of comparative religion. Scholars of religion have been aware of the unavoidable hermeneutical problems involved in applying the Western concept "religion" to traditions that are geographically, linguistically, and culturally distant from our own. The rhetoric of religious experience, predicated as it is on Cartesian

dualism, allowed scholars to distinguish the universal experiential ground of religion on the one hand, and its diverse culturally bound manifestations on the other, creating an opposition that recapitulates the classical Cartesian bifurcation of mind and matter.

The Buddhist tradition seemed to support such an analysis, as Buddhist doctrine supposedly distinguished between the ineffable experiential goal of Buddhist practice, and the socially and culturally determined teachings that point toward that goal. According to one popular exegetical strategy, the whole of the Buddhist tradition is not but the attempt to inculcate the experience attained by the Buddha while he sat in meditation under the bodhi tree. Thus, Buddhist ethics, doctrine, art, and ritual ultimately emerge from, and revert to, a mode of meditative experience. In the words of Edward Conze, "meditational practices constitute the very core of the Buddhist approach to life. ... As prayer in Christianity, so meditation is here the very heartbeat of the religion" (Conze 1956: 11).

Approached through this "hermeneutic of experience," the interminable conceptual categories expounded in scholastic Buddhist path treatises, or the hair-splitting classifications of the Abhidharmikas, are frequently presumed to be grounded in a non-conceptual mode (or modes) of cognition. Buddhist philosophy, we are told, clearly articulates the difference between the "roots" and the "branches," the fundamental" and the "traces," the "absolute" and the "contingent." Indeed, the Buddhist tradition is itself often designated an "expedient means" (*upāya*) in order to differentiate it from the fundamental truth of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) which transcends sectarian or institutional allegiances. To quote again from Conze, "each and every [Buddhist philosophical] proposition must be considered in reference to its spiritual intention and as a formulation of meditational experiences acquired in the course of the process of winning salvation."[1]

Buddhist philosophical literature is thus presumed to constitute, among other things, a detailed map of inner space, charted with the aid of sophisticated meditation techniques that allow Buddhist yogis to travel the breadth of the psychic terrain. Accordingly, many of the key technical terms relating to Buddhist praxis, including *śamatha* (concentration), *vipaśyanā* (insight), *samādhi* (trance), *samāpatti* (higher attainment), *prajñā* (wisdom), *smṛti* (mindfulness), *srotaāpatti* (stream-entry),[2] *kenshō* (seeing one's nature), *satori* (understanding), and even *makyō* (realm of illusion), are interpreted phenomenologically: they are assumed to designate discrete "states of consciousness" experienced by Buddhist practitioners in the midst of their meditative practice.

Scholarly writings on mysticism continue to be preoccupied with the epistemological problems entailed in the notion of direct or unmediated experience. Ninian Smart, Steven Katz, Robert Forman, and numerous others have carried on a lively debate over the degree to which mystical experiences are shaped by prior culturally mediated expectations and presuppositions, over whether or not one can separate a mystic's report of his experiences from his interpretations, over the existence of so-called pure consciousness devoid of intentional objects,

over competing schemes for typologizing mystical states, and so on.[3] I do not intend to enlist in this debate here.[4] Rather, I would draw attention to a presupposition made by virtually all parties to these debates, namely, that terms such as "religious experience," "mystical experience," and/or "meditative experience" are primarily referential or denotative, i.e., that their signification lies in the signifieds to which they allegedly refer.

This is clearly an important issue for scholars of Buddhism, who tend to accept the view that meditative experience was central to the Buddhist tradition throughout its history. There are, in fact, cogent grounds on which to question this supposition. As mentioned above, Wayne Proudfoot has argued that the rhetoric of religious experience in the West is of recent vintage, and the popularity of the "hermeneutic of experience" is due in part to the manner in which it seemed to offer a defense against secular critique. Wilhelm Halbfass has made a similar point with reference to the writings of contemporary Hindu and Neo-Vedānta exegetes such as Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975), whose overriding emphasis on experience is largely apologetic, reflecting "the encounter of the Indian tradition with Western science and philosophy" (Halbfass 1988: 395). Finally, the epistemic commitments attendant upon the rhetoric of experience in the discipline of religious studies are patently Cartesian, and we should exercise caution when imposing a seventeenth-century European metaphysic on medieval Buddhist writings.

Buddhist scriptural materials present daunting philological and hermeneutic difficulties to the contemporary exegete. The tendency to approach the compendious Buddhist *mārga* treatises (texts delineating the stages on the Buddhist path) as if they presented a phenomenological analysis of the experiences of seasoned meditators is understandable: how else are we to approach such materials? Nevertheless, I hope to show that the "phenomenological approach" may well be misguided; in the end it may reveal more about the dangers of projection and transference in the study of Buddhism than it tells us about Buddhism itself.[5] For there is evidence that the emphasis on "transformative personal experience" may not have been as central to traditional Buddhist monastic practice as some modern exegetes would have us believe. Moreover, those contemporary Buddhist movements that do emphasize meditative experience often turn out to be movements that were themselves influenced by their encounter with the Occident.

It is, of course, impossible to do justice to the issue in a single article; the so-called Buddhist tradition is far from a univocal entity, and a convincing revisionist analysis of a second-century Indian scholastic text may tell us little about a seventh-century Chinese Tantric liturgy, or the poetry of a thirteenth-century Japanese Zen abbot. But while few would contest the diversity of phenomena that go under the name "Buddhist," many still approach such disparate materials with a set of broad assumptions concerning the nature and goals of Buddhist practice.

The assumptions that inform scholarly readings of classical Buddhist

materials are shaped in part by our familiarity with the living Buddhist tradition, and when it comes to meditation two contemporary traditions have dominated Western discussions of Buddhist meditation: the *vipassanā* movement in Southeast Asia and Japaneze Zen. Indeed, the impact of these two forms of practice on Buddhist scholarship is far out of proportion to their size or influence in their homelands. The reason for their stature in the West is no mystery: partisans of both *vipassanā* and Zen have been largely responsible for perpetuating the image of Buddhism as a rational, humanistic, contemplative creed that eschews magic and empty ritual. And it was this image of an enlightened spirituality based on experience rather than faith that attracted many scholars to Buddhism in the first place.

In this article I will argue the need to reexamine the conceptual categories and epistemological assumptions that inform many modern presentations of Buddhism. Specifically, I will show that the emphasis on meditative experience as the sine qua non of Buddhism is misplaced, and that even in the case of contemporary *vipassanā* and Zen, historical, ethnographic, and philosophical analysis belies the notion that the rhetoric of experience functions ostensively to refer to discrete, identifiable, and replicable "states of consciousness." This is not to deny that veteran Buddhist meditators have "experiences," just that the relationship between what they "experience" and what they say about it is far more tenuous than is sometimes believed.

Zen and the art of participant-observation

In his short classic *Zen in the Art of Archery*, Eugen Herrigel, following the lead of D.T. Suzuki, assures us that Zen "is not speculation at all but *immediate experience* of what, as the bottomless ground of Being, cannot be apprehended by intellectual means, and cannot be conceived or interpreted even after the most unequivocal and incontestable experiences: one knows it by not knowing it" (Herrigel 1971: 7; my emphasis). Putting aside the obscurantism of this passage, one does gather that the goal of Zen is some sort of personal experience—an experience that Herrigel sought through training in Zen archery. After a long and somewhat frustrating apprenticeship, in which he learns not to shoot the arrow but rather to allow the arrow to "shoot itself," Herrigel finally has his first breakthrough. Herrigel's dramatic account of this moment reads as follows:

> Weeks went by without my advancing a step. At the same time I discovered that this did not disturb me in the least. Had I grown tired of the whole business? Whether I learned the art or not, whether I experienced what the Master meant by "It" or not, whether I found the way to Zen or not—all this suddenly seemed to have become so remote, so indifferent, that it no longer troubled me. ... Then, one day, after a shot, the Master made a deep bow and broke off the lesson. "Just then

> 'It' shot!" he cried, as I stared at him bewildered. And when I at last understood what he meant I couldn't suppress a sudden woop of delight. "What I have said," the Master told me severely, "was not praise, only a statement that ought not to touch you. Nor was my bow meant for you, for you are entirely innocent of this shot. You remained this time absolutely self-oblivious and without purpose in the highest tension, so that the shot fell from you like a ripe fruit. Now go on practicing as if nothing had happened."
>
> (Herrigel 1971: 56–61)

There are, of course, good reasons to question the veracity of this curious document. While Herrigel presents us with a first-person narrative, placing dialogue in quotation marks, we must remember that his archery teacher spoke only Japanese, and that Herrigel required the aid of an interpreter throughout the course of his training. Moreover, instructions were given while Herrigel was occupied with his bow, so he could hardly have taken verbatim notes. The book is clearly less a record of what the master actually *said*, than a record of what Herrigel thought the master *meant*.

Even if we are sympathetic to Herrigel's version of the episode, we are still struck by the fact that Herrigel's description of his accomplishment belies his own understanding of the aims of Zen archery. Both the introduction to the book by D.T. Suzuki and earlier comments by Herrigel assure the reader that the goal of such training is some sort of "incontestable experience" in which the student becomes one with the "groundlessness" of being (Herrigel 1971: 7). Yet Herrigel only learns of his success when informed of it by a third party. Herrigel's knowledge that "It" released the arrow came not through some powerful personal experience—mystical, pure, non-dual, or otherwise—but rather second-hand, through the word of his teacher.

One might question the wisdom of beginning my inquiry with Herrigel's somewhat idiosyncratic work. Despite the imprimatur of D.T. Suzuki's introduction, Herrigel was neither a Buddhist scholar, nor an initiate in a traditional Buddhist sect. He was, rather, a German academic with a distinctly romantic bent of mind, who taught philosophy at Tokyo University in the 1920s.[6] Moreover, Herrigel had little formal training in Buddhist thought and history, and a scant command of the Japanese language. Be that as it may, *Zen in the Art of Archery* is useful for us as it illustrates many of the shortcomings characteristic of writings on "Buddhist mysticism," including (1) the poor quality by anthropological standards of many "field reports" in this area—little consideration, if any, is paid to the rudiments of "participant-observer" protocol, and virtually no attempt is made to distinguish between emic and etic description, or to separate primary ethnographic data from secondary interpretation; (2) the unabashed romanticism, replete with notions of the "mysterious East" that infect such narratives; (3) the uncritical assumption that, since the essential "experience" underlying the outer culturally mediated forms remains

unchanged through time and across cultures, contemporary practices can be used as transparent windows to the past, and the corollary notion that a "living master" is preferable to a "dead text;" and last but not least, (4) the tendency to psychologize ritual acts—to assume that the cultural significance and religious intent of a particular practice is best located in the subjective experience it is intended to induce, rather than in a mode of behavior perfected through rehearsal and repetition. (Note that the final stage in Herrigel's training involved a public performance and examination of his archery skills. This task required that the execution of the rite become so routinized that the added pressures of a public venue would have no effect upon his performance [Herrigel 1971: 71–72].)

Experience, scripture, and exegetical authority

First-person accounts of Buddhist mystical experiences are, in fact, not as common as one might expect in a tradition supposedly intent on producing them, and of the few premodern autobiographical accounts we do possess, most are explicitly "Tantric" in nature, rendering them of somewhat limited use in an analysis of "mainstream" Buddhist meditation theory. The orthodox explanation for the paucity of personal testimonials is that Buddhist monks were explicitly forbidden from vaunting their spiritual accomplishments in public.[7] There is little doubt that such a prohibition would have discouraged the writing of personal accounts describing one's meditative experience. However, this prohibition would have served a tactical purpose as well, as it allowed the tradition to tacitly impute meditative accomplishment to eminent monks, while at the same time obviating the need for such monks to make any explicit claims on their own behalf.[8]

In any event, while personal accounts may be lacking, there is no shortage of prescriptive manuals delineating in exhaustive detail the stages of the Buddhist path (*mārga*). These texts were highly esteemed in the monastic tradition: Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* ("Path of Purity"), for example, constituted the central authority on all issues pertaining to the Buddhist path for Theravāda Buddhists. Chih-i's *Mo-ho chih-kuan* ("The Great Calming and Contemplation") was accorded an analogous position in the Chinese T'ien-t'ai tradition, while Indian and Tibetan monastics turned to works such as Asanga's *Bodhisattvabhūmi* ("Stages of the Bodhisattva's Path"), Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama* ("Course of Practice"), Tsong kha pa's *Lam rim chen mo* ("Great Book on the Stages of the Path"), or the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* ("Ornament of Realizations") attributed to Maitreyanātha. These massive exegetical works were often accorded an authority that was, for all practical purposes, equal to that of the sermons of the Buddha.

There is a marked tendency in the field to assume that such *mārga* treatises are descriptive accounts of meditative states based on the personal experiences of accomplished adepts, rather than prescriptive systematizations of scriptural

materials. Paul Griffiths, for example, in his study of Indian Buddhist meditation theory, asserts that, "The scholastic texts of Indian Buddhism preserve for us an especially highly developed and tightly structured set of descriptions of virtuoso religious practice; they are therefore significant for our understanding of such practice considered as an important aspect of the history of religions" (Griffiths 1983a: 2–3). And in a detailed philosophical analysis of the concept of *nirodhasamāpatti*. Griffiths begins with the following: "It is upon meditative practice that the religious life of the Buddhist virtuoso is based and from such practice that systematic Buddhist philosophical and soteriological theory begins. . . . It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the whole of the magnificently complex edifice of Buddhist philosophy is a drawing out and systematization of the implications of [meditative] experience" (Griffiths 1986: xiii).

Griffiths, who is interested in the role that meditative states play in Buddhist philosophy, works with a set of highly abstruse and quintessentially scholastic texts. Yet he never directly addresses the issue as to whether or not the authors of such texts were themselves the religious virtuosos to whom he refers. This begs the issue, especially as the notion of *nirodha* has all the makings of a wholly scholastic construct. (Note that *nirodha* is characterized as the utter cessation of physical and mental processes—a state that would be indistinguishable from death were it not for the fact that the body, which is rendered temporarily impregnable, retains its "vitality" [*āyus*] and inner heat. A first-person description of such a state is a logical impossibility.)[9]

Unlike Griffiths, who, like many of his professional colleagues, *assumes* that Indian Buddhist philosophical systems emerged in part from reflection on the meditative experiences of accomplished monks, Lambert Schmithausen tries to *prove* it. In a short but provocative article, Schmithausen argues that the idealist philosophy of the Yogācāra school must have arisen in conjunction with a particular type of meditative experience: "Yogācāra idealism primarily resulted from a *generalization* of a fact observed in the case of meditation-objects, i.e., in the context of *spiritual practice*" (Schmithausen 1976: 241, emphasis in original). This is not to say that this doctrine emerged in a philosophical vacuum: "Specifically idealist formulations defining all phenomena as being nothing but mind (*cittamātra*) or cognition (*vijñaptimātra*) obviously made their first appearance in connection with reflections on objects of visionary meditation. Their generalization, however, was essentially motivated or made possible by the historical background of Mahāyānistic illusionism describing all finite entities or notions as empty, unreal, and illusory, comparable to magic or to a dream, etc." (ibid.: 249).

It would take us too far afield to examine the details of Schmithausen's historical reconstruction here. Suffice it to say that nowhere does Schmithausen claim access to the meditative states that, according to his argument, constitute the provenance of Yogācāra idealism. His own argument does not demonstrate that Yogācāra idealism emerged from reflection on an actual experience, so much as it shows that such a position can be derived from reflection upon the

prescriptive meditative and soteriological ideals enunciated in Mahāyāna textual sources. There is simply no need to trace the emergence of Buddhist idealism to experiences attained in meditative trance; idealist positions can be derived from philosophical inquiry into the status of perceptions arising due to simple epistemic error (the rope-snake analogy comes to mind), or from reflection on the ontology of dreams (as is found in the Taoist *Chuangtzu*).[10]

In fact, the Buddhist tradition is itself hesitant to claim that *mārga* narratives were composed on the basis of personal experience. This is not to suggest that the authors did not themselves engage in meditative practices. (Indeed, Buddhist hagiographical sources often depict these monks as accomplished yogis and powerful thaumaturges.) My point is rather that the major Buddhist path treatises do not include personal testimonials by their authors attesting to the veracity of the meditative states they describe. On the contrary, the authors seem to have gone to great lengths to efface their own voices; these accounts are, for the most part, eminently impersonal, relying exclusively on scriptural proof-texts to substantiate their exegeses. In fact it is difficult to imagine how anyone could mistake this genre of religious literature for "expressions" or "reports" of personal experiences; they are first and foremost scholastic compendiums, compiled by monks of formidable learning who were attempting to systematize and schematize the confused and often conflicting descriptions of practices and stages found scattered throughout the canon.[11] Moreover, they are filled with detailed accounts of the supernatural attainments (*siddhi*) that accompany particular meditative trances, including such powers as walking through walls, flying through the air, becoming invisible, reading minds, recalling past lives, and so on.[12]

To reiterate, it is not merely that we can never know whether or not the seminal Buddhist *mārga* texts were informed by the spiritual experiences of their authors. Rather, the legitimacy of these texts would have been impugned had their authors openly relied upon, or even alluded to, their own experiences. Buddhist philosophers, including such authorities as Dharmakīrti and Candrakīrti, were generally circumspect regarding truth claims based on appeals to personal experience, yogic or otherwise.[13] The legitimacy and authority of Buddhist *mārga* narratives lie precisely in their filiality to the canon; much of these texts often consists of little more than carefully organized excerpts from sūtras and commentaries. While their authors need not have been accomplished yogis, an impecable knowledge of the Buddhist scriptural legacy was clearly *de rigueur*.

A paradigmatic example is the *Visuddhimagga*, a work accepted throughout the Theravāda world as the unimpeachable authority on everything related to meditation. The author, Buddhaghosa, was a fifth-century Indian monk who traveled to Sri Lanka and established himself at the great monastery Anurādhapura, where he is said to have spent his time mastering the Sinhalese commentarial tradition under Sanghapāla. He then devoted himself to translating Sinhalese works into Pāli, and composing his own commentaries and treatises.

Nowhere in Buddhaghosa's works does he claim to have relied upon personal inspiration or meditative insight. The situation is, in fact, quite to the contrary: by his own account the *Visuddhimagga* was composed on the basis of his study of the available scriptural and commentarial corpus: "I shall expound the comforting Path of Purification, pure in expositions, relying on the teaching of the dwellers in the Great Monastery [Anurādhapura] . . ." Indeed, only once in the *Visuddhimagga* does Buddhaghosa openly advance an opinion of his own, which consists solely in expressing his preference for one scriptural interpretation over another with regard to a particularly arcane point concerning the recollection of past lives.[14]

Precisely the same is true of Chih-i's (538–597) classic, the *Mo-ho chih-kuan*. Not once does the author of this massive authoritative compendium on Buddhist practice explicitly refer to his own meditative experience.[15] In fact, the same may be said for virtually all of the major Buddhist *mārga* treatises delineating the "stages of the path;" it would be difficult, if not impossible, to construe these scholastic edifices as predicated upon the meditative accomplishments of their authors.

One might ask if it is really plausible that the vast Buddhist corpus bearing on the subject of meditation and meditative states, and the highly specialized language that evolved in conjunction with the discussion and differentiation of such states, could have emerged in the absence of any real experiential referent(s). In response, I would draw attention to the enormous body of academic literature bearing on mysticism in the West, growing out of the pioneering work of Rudolf Otto, William James, William Ernest Hocking, W.T. Stace, and so on. Few of the major theologians and academics who have contributed to this literature claim to have experienced the states they attempt to describe and analyze. One of the most influential theorists in the field, William James, openly admits to having no propensity for mysticism: "Whether my treatment of mystical states will shed more light or darkness, I do not know, for my own constitution shuts me out from their enjoyment almost entirely, and I can speak of them only at second hand" (James 1961: 299). Yet the apparent paucity (if not absence) of first-hand experience does not seem to have impeded the evolution of a descriptive, typological, and theoretical discourse on "mystical experience" in Western academe.[16]

Experience and monastic praxis

I do not want to suggest that all scholars have uncritically accepted Buddhist *mārga* treatises as descriptive mystical accounts. Robert Buswell and Robert Gimello, the editors of a recent publication on Buddhist *mārga* theory, are sensitive to the patently prescriptive nature of this genre:

> The various stages outlined in highly schematized versions of mārga may have no direct connection with any real problems or experiences in

> the lives of real persons. They may apply only analogically and normatively, prompting students to mold their own life experiences according to the ideals of their religious heritage. Or they may be means by which individual experience can be made communal, to the extent that common prescriptions of practice may foster experiences similar to those of one's colleagues.
>
> (Buswell and Gimello eds. 1992: 11)

While rejecting the notion that Buddhist *mārga* texts were written as first-hand reports, Buswell and Gimello suggest nevertheless that such texts were used to "foster" certain meditative experiences in Buddhist practitioners. Thus the prescriptive model presented in the commentarial literature is rendered descriptive of the inner experience of one who rigorously strives to implement it. This position is fully elaborated in Robert Gimello's seminal essay on Buddhism and mystical experience, in which he argues that Buddhist practices were designed so as to evoke experiences that conform to, and thus confirm, the central tenets of Buddhism: "rather than speak of Buddhist doctrines as interpretations of Buddhist mystical experiences, one might better speak of Buddhist mystical experiences as deliberately contrived exemplifications of Buddhist doctrine" (Gimello 1978: 193).

In so far as such treatises were used as "guidebooks" for meditative practice, Gimello's analysis appears sound. Yet Gimello's theoretical remarks assume, rather than demonstrate, that Buddhist *mārga* texts were actually used in such a manner. This is an area in which philosophical reflection must take a back seat to historical and ethnographic research. A summary perusal of the available historical and ethnographic literature suggests that Buddhist *mārga* texts were manipulated much as were Buddhist sūtras; that is, they functioned more as sacred talismans than as practical guides. Texts on meditation were venerated as invaluable spiritual treasures to be copied, memorized, chanted, and otherwise revered.[17]

In fact, contrary to the image propagated by twentieth-century apologists, the actual practice of what we would call meditation rarely played a major role in Buddhist monastic life. The ubiquitous notion of *mappō* or the "final degenerate age of the dharma" served to reinforce the notion that "enlightenment" was not in fact a viable goal for monks living in inauspicious times. This is readily confirmed by anthropological accounts: modern monks, at least those who are not associated with "Protestant Buddhist" revival movements (see below), consider *nirvāṇa* to be an impossibly distant ideal.[18] As such, the more earnest monks are content to spend their time cultivating moral virtue, studying scriptures, and performing merit-making rituals in the hope of being reborn in more favorable circumstances.

We will see below that the two Buddhist traditions most commonly associated with meditation—Theravāda *vipassanā* and Japanese Zen—were both influenced by recent reform movements that stressed the centrality of meditation to

the Buddhist path. The practice of what is now known as *vipassanā* can be traced to early twentieth-century teachers such as Phra Acharn Mun (1870–1949) in Thailand, Dharmapāla (1864–1933) in Sri Lanka, and U Nārada (1868–1955) and Ledi Sayādaw (1846–1923) in Burma. Prior to this time, *bhāvanā* (meditation, or mental development) consisted largely of the recitation of Pāli texts pertaining to meditation (such as the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and the *Mettā-sutta*), chanting verses enumerating the qualities of the Buddha, reciting formulaic lists of the thirty-two parts of the body, and so on. Such exercises are closer to what we might call devotional practices than to meditation, in that they are intended as vehicles for accumulating merit and cultivating wholesome attitudes, rather than as devices for inducing "altered states of consciousness."

Even today, after the full effect of the *vipassanā* movement has been felt, historical and ethnographic studies still testify to the fact that meditation plays a minor if not negligible role in the lives of the majority of Theravāda monks.[19] In fact, most such studies have little if anything to say about the role of meditation in monastic training, with the notable exception of a few monographs specifically devoted to contemporary Theravāda reform movements.[20] While such reforms do promote meditation as a central component of the path, their effect has been felt more in the realm of ideology than in the realm of praxis; the vast majority of Theravāda monks still consider their vocation to lie in *ganthadhura* or "teaching," rather than *vipassanādhura* or "meditation."[21] Moreover, even the *vipassanādhura* monks will insist that the development of morality (*sīla*) through proper observance of the monastic rule (*vinaya*) is more essential to the path than meditation per se.[22] Carrithers points out that the stress on moral behavior and the relative lack of any emphasis on religious experience is in fact fully consonant with the thrust of Theravāda tradition—a tradition that "considers spectacular experience as an obstacle to practice, because of the great emotional disturbance involved. . . . There is a profound unity in Buddhism over this question, for the objective of meditation in all Buddhist traditions is the cultivation of wisdom founded in tranquility and equanimity" (Carrithers 1983: 19). While we do find some contemporary Theravāda teachers touting the benefits of exalted meditative experience, they are invariably associated with modern reform movements stimulated by contact with Western missionaries and Occidental scholarship. We will return to this point below.

The same is largely true of Japanese Zen, the "meditation school" of East Asian Buddhism. The word "Zen" commonly conjures up images of austere black-robed monks wholly intent upon reaching "enlightenment" (*satori*) through the practice of introspective meditation under a strict master. But such an image is in part the product of twentieth-century Japanese intellectuals who appropriated exegetical strategies borrowed from the West in their effort to rationalize Japanese Buddhism. Japanese Zen apologists, conversant in contemporary Western philosophy, emphasized the role of religious experience in order to counter the threat posed to Buddhism by modernization, secularization, and science (see below). In point of fact, traditional Ch'an and Zen practice

was oriented not towards engendering "enlightenment" experiences, but rather to perfecting the ritual performance of Buddhahood (Sharf 1989). The modern notion that Ch'an and Zen monks were required to experience *satori* before they could "inherit the dharma" is simply inaccurate.[23]

Even in the modern period one rarely hears mention of *kenshō* or *satori* in traditional Rinzai and Sōtō monks halls (*sōdō*). Novice monks (*unsui*) studying in Zen monasteries are typically anxious to leave the training hall as soon as possible, hurrying home to take charge of the family temple after completing their minimum one-to-three years in training. The few ambitious monks who possess the talent and drive to become "masters" (*rōshi*) will remain in the monastery for upwards of ten to fifteen years, busily engaged in perfecting the elaborate ceremonial repertoire incumbent upon a Zen *rōshi*. In the case of Rinzai Zen, this repertoire includes mastering vast selections from Zen *kōan* collections and commentaries so as to be able to guide students through ritualized *kōan* exchanges. Here too, prescriptive religious texts are treated not so much as practical guides for meditation, but rather as liturgies to be memorized for ritual performance.

The picture of Korean Sŏn Buddhist monastic life that emerges from Robert Buswell's recent book (1992) resembles the pattern seen above. While it is true that the monks and nuns practicing in Sŏn meditation halls are held in high esteem, such persons constitute no more than about five percent of the ordained clergy in the dominant Chogye order (Buswell 1992: 167). As for the remaining ninety-five percent, "the majority . . . spend no time in meditation, and many have no intention of ever undertaking such training" (ibid.: 218). Moreover, while the Korean Sŏn tradition pays lip-service to "sudden enlightenment," Buswell notes that "a disciplined life, not the transformative experience of enlightenment, is actually most crucial to the religion. This need not necessarily be even an examined, or an informed, life, though those would be highly prized, but one that is so closely and carefully structured as to provide little opportunity for ethical failings or mental defilements to manifest themselves" (ibid.: 219).

Finally, I should briefly mention Buddhist Tantra, a late Buddhist development that traditionally placed more emphasis on spiritual praxis than doctrinal learning. Scholars of Tantra (who tend to be trained in philology and doctrinal history rather than in the social sciences), often depict Tantric adepts as capable of astounding mental feats made possible through meditative endeavor. Such monks, we are told, are able to mentally construct alternative universes of mind-boggling complexity. Following the detailed instructions found in Tantric ritual manuals, Tantric monks are said to visualize hundreds and even thousands of technicolor deities, all of which can be simultaneously held in the "mind's eye" for extended periods of time. Moreover, the climactic ritual procedures that signify the identity of practitioner and deity are regarded by scholars as the outward manifestation of an inward mystical union.

In fact, much of the scholarship in this area suffers from the all-too-common methodological error mentioned above: scholars read ideological prescription as

phenomenological description. As soon as one redirects attention away from the *content* of the manuals, towards the manner in which such texts are actually used, one finds that the elaborate "visualizations" or "contemplations" recorded in the manuals are instantiated through formal recitation and ritual gesture. Very little time, if any, is allotted for assimilating the content of the texts, or for fixing an image of a deity in the mind. Instead, monks chant the texts in unison, hurrying through each section of the ritual in order to finish it in the time allotted. This is true not only in the case of Japanese Tantra (i.e., the Shingon and Tendai *mikkyō* lineages), which I know from my own field research (see Sharf 1994), but also in the case of the Tibetan tradition. Stephan Beyer, while accepting the notion that Tantric rites are "meditations," is nevertheless candid about the problems involved:

> The ability to achieve single-minded concentration on a vividly appearing picture is the result of long and really rather frustrating practice. We must remember—and this point should be emphasized—that the visualization is performed during a ritual; that is, the practitioner is reciting a text (which is either placed on a small table in front of him or which he has memorized), and the visualization takes place in time with the rhythmically chanted textual description of the evocation. . . . The reading of the ritual text in the assembly hall often goes at breakneck speed, and the vast majority of monks are unable to visualize that quickly, if indeed they are able to visualize at all.
>
> (Beyer 1973: 71)

Beyer goes on to suggest that success in visualization is a rare occurrence: "I once asked a highly placed incarnate lama if he could really visualize the subtle deities. He replied that, roughly and in a general way, he could; but he added that the Toden rinpoch'e (the head of all the yogins), with more than fifty years of practice in visualization, could picture these deities in perfect detail and keep track of them all at once" (ibid.: 75). I also took the liberty of questioning a number of Tantric teachers, including Japanese *ajari* (empowered masters) and a well-known Tibetan *tulku* in a Kagyüpa lineage, about their own meditative accomplishments. All reported rather limited success at visualization, but they were usually quick to explain that their own teacher, or the head of their lineage, or the founder of their sect, or some great yogi of old did in fact succeed in mentally constructing alternative realities. It would seem that contemporary scholars are not the only ones predisposed to ignore the disjunction between the textual ideal on the one hand, and the lived contingencies of religious practice on the other.

I do not want to suggest that lucid visualization of this sort is impossible in principle—there may indeed be Tantric yogis who, practicing in quiet isolation, are able to create an eidetic internal vision of a complex *maṇḍala*. However, this is not of particular relevance to an understanding of Tantric rituals as performed

by the vast majority of Asian practitioners, who simply do not aspire to such psychic feats. Ethnographic accounts strongly suggest that such practitioners are more concerned with ceremony and performance than with "inner experience" per se.

The invention of tradition

At this point some may be tempted to invoke the time-worn distinction between "elite" and "popular" traditions. Surely, the fact that *most* Buddhists practice meditation in a "routinized" and perhaps even "superficial" manner does not mean that *all* Buddhists do so. Surely, there must have been some who have diligently and energetically followed the prescribed techniques and have thereby come to experience the exalted states promised in the *mārga* texts. Surely, the fact that only a handful of Buddhists ever succeed in no way detracts from the pivotal role played by the *ideal* of meditative experience in the Buddhist tradition.

Such an objection tacitly accepts the notion that meditative experience has in fact been the ideal to which Buddhists aspired throughout Asian history. One often hears scholars describe contemporary monastic practices under the rubric of "routinization" or "banalization," implying the degeneration of an earlier and supposedly purer practice in which "outward form" was subordinated to "inner experience." (Note that this interpretative strategy recapitulates classical Buddhist *mappō* theory.) Yet there is evidence that the Buddhist emphasis on "inner experience" is in large part a product of modern and often lay-oriented reform movements, most notably those associated with the *vipassanā* revival in Southeast Asia, and those associated with contemporary Zen movements in Japan.

As I have discussed the modern construction of "Zen spirituality" elsewhere, I will present only the briefest summary of my findings here.[24] Western conceptions of Zen have been unduly influenced by the writings of a small group of twentieth-century Japanese intellectuals, many of whom are associated with the so-called Kyoto School (*Kyōto gakuha*), including D.T. Suzuki (1870–1966), Hisamatsu Shin'ichi (1889–1980), and Nishitani Keiji (1900–1990). The view of Zen propounded by these men was based not so much on their familiarity with classical Zen monasticism, as on a particular ideological agenda inherited from the New Buddhism (*shin bukkyō*) of the Meiji period (1868–1912).

New Buddhism developed in response to the devastating critique and persecution of Buddhism (*haibutsu kishaku*) initiated by the government in the early years of the Meiji. Government propagandists, who sought to turn Shinto into a tool of state ideology, condemned Buddhism as a corrupt, decadent, anti-social, parasitic, and superstitious creed inimical to Japan's need for scientific and technological advancement. Buddhist reformers responded by acknowledging the corruption and self-interest that characterized the late Tokugawa Buddhist establishment, but they insisted that such corruption merely indicated the degree to which Buddhism had fallen from its spiritual roots. Accordingly, the problem

lay not in Buddhism itself, but rather in the institutional and sectarian trappings to which Buddhism had fallen prey.

In this defensive strategy one can discern the influence of the late nineteenth-century European *Zeitgeist* that permeated university campuses in Meiji Japan. Japanese intellectuals, seeking to bring their nation into the "modern world," were naturally drawn to the European critique of institutional religion—the legacy of the anticlericism and anti-ritualism of the Reformation, the rationalism and empiricism of the Enlightenment, the romanticism of figures such as Schleiermacher and Dilthey, and the existentialism of Nietzsche. Some Japanese Buddhist leaders went so far as to argue that the official suppression of Buddhism was in fact a purifying force, which would purge Buddhism of its degenerate accretions and effect a return to the original "essence" of the Buddha's teachings. The result, which came to be known as New Buddhism, was touted as "modern," "cosmopolitan," "humanistic," and "socially responsible." This reconstructed Buddhism, under the guise of "true" or "pure" Buddhism, was conceived of as a "world religion" ready to take its rightful place alongside other universal creeds.

Proponents of Zen Buddhism followed suit, arguing that Zen is immune to Enlightenment critiques of religion precisely because it is not a religion in the institutional sense at all; it is, rather, an uncompromisingly empirical, rational, and scientific mode of inquiry into the true nature of things. The early works of D.T. Suzuki, who had studied in his youth under the German-American essayist and proponent of the "Religion of Science" Paul Carus, are written very much in the spirit of New Buddhism. In an English introduction to Buddhism first published in 1907, for example, Suzuki confidently declares that Mahāyāna is both rational and empirical, and that it "anticipated the outcome of modern psychological researches" (1963: 40). But Suzuki's approach to Buddhist exegesis was to shift dramatically following the 1911 publication of *Zen no kenkyū* (*An Inquiry into the Good*) by Suzuki's longtime friend, the philosopher Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945).

Nishida's essay revolved around the elucidation of "pure experience" (*junsui keiken*). Pure experience, according to Nishida, means to "know reality exactly as it is . . . without the admixture of any thinking or discrimination. . . . [P]ure experience is identical with immediate experience. When one immediately experiences a conscious state of the self, there is still neither subject nor object; knowledge and its object are entirely one. This is the purest form of experience."[25] Nishida's emphasis on pure experience was based on his somewhat idiosyncratic reading of Western philosophy, particularly the writings of William James, to which he was introduced by none other than D.T. Suzuki. Suzuki was quick to appreciate the significance of Nishida's pure experience, making it the central hermeneutical principle in his presentations of Zen. Suzuki began to render any and all Zen cultural artifacts—from *kōan* exchanges to dry-landscape gardens—as "expressions of" or "pointers toward" a pure, unmediated, and non-dual experience, known in Zen as *satori*. Not only was such an

experience touted as the essence of Zen, it was also said to lie at the heart of all authentic religious teachings, be they Christian, Islamic, Hindu, or whatever.[26] This approach to Zen exegesis has since been adopted by a number of Japanese intellectuals, including two who have been particularly active in Buddhist-Christian dialogue: Nishitani Keiji and Abe Masao.

The irony of this situation is that the key Japanese terms for "experience"—*keiken* and *taiken*—are rarely attested in premodern Japanese texts. Their contemporary currency dates to the early Meiji, when they were adopted to render Western philosophical terms for which there was no ready Japanese equivalent. One searches in vain for a premodern Chinese or Japanese equivalent to the phenomenological notion of experience. Nor is it legitimate to interpret such technical Zen terms as *satori* (literally, to understand), or *kenshō* (to see one's original nature), as denoting some species of "unmediated experience" in the sense of Nishida's *junsui keiken*. In traditional Chinese Buddhist literature, such terms are used to denote the full comprehension and appreciation of central Buddhist tenets such as emptiness, Buddha-nature, or dependent origination. There are simply no *a priori* grounds for conceiving such moments of insight in phenomenological terms. Indeed, Chinese Buddhist commentators in general, and Ch'an exegetes in particular, tend to be antipathetic to any form of phenomenological reduction.

While the writings of D.T. Suzuki and his followers profoundly influenced popular conceptions of Zen both in Japan and in the West, their influence inside traditional Rinzai and Sōtō training halls has been rather limited. "Professional" Zen monks typically have little regard for university professors and intellectuals who, lacking the appropriate ritual training and institutional credentials (i.e., "dharma transmission"), nonetheless feel free to pontificate on the "essence" of Zen. As I have argued above, Zen monastic training in contemporary Japan continues to emphasize physical discipline and ritual competence, while little if any attention is paid to inner experience. The notable exceptions to this rule are two contemporary lay-oriented organizations, the F.A.S. Society and the Sanbōkyōdan, on which I will comment only briefly.

The F.A.S. Society was founded by the philosopher and lay Zen practitioner Hisamatsu Shin'ichi in 1958 after he returned from extensive travels abroad.[27] Hisamatsu, following Nishida and Suzuki, insisted that true Zen is not religion per se, but rather the non-contingent, trans-cultural, non-dual spiritual gnosis that underlies all authentic religious inspiration. While the F.A.S. continues to hold weekly study meetings and occasional Zen retreats in Kyoto, members of this loose-knit organization have never been great in number, and their influence is felt primarily through the writings of Hisamatsu and a few of his followers (notably Abe Masao).[28]

Unlike the F.A.S. the Sanbōkyōdan (Three Treasures Association) has had a major impact on Western conceptions of Zen practice. This sect was formally established by Yasutani Hakuun (1885–1973) in 1954, although Yasutani had in fact been disseminating the teachings of his own innovative teacher Harada

Daiun (1870–1961) since the 1940s. The Sanbōkyōdan, which has declared its legal and ideological independence from the Zen establishment, has popularized a form of intensive meditation practice oriented specifically toward lay practitioners. Teachers in the Harada-Yasutani line emphasize a rather idiosyncratic use of *kōan*, coupled with the controversial practice of placing students under intense pressure to quickly experience *satori*.

This modern Zen movement constitutes a fascinating synthesis of the anti-establishment and anti-clerical ideology of Meiji New Buddhism, coupled with an emphasis on meditative experience and *satori* popularized by Suzuki. Moreover, it has all the makings of a Japanese "new religion" (*shin shūkyō*), with its disdain for scriptural study, its shrill polemics against the orthodox Zen establishment, its organized use of written testimonials in efforts at proselytization, and its promise of rapid spiritual progress (the "democratization" of *satori*).[29] Indeed, such rapid progress is possible precisely because accomplishment in Zen is no longer seen in terms of doctrinal or ritual mastery. Rather, spiritual success lies in the momentary experience of *satori*—a state that students in the Sanbōkyōdan have been known to experience in their very first seven-day intensive retreat (*sesshin*). It is significant that many of the key personalities responsible for introducing Zen to the West have been affiliated with this controversial and relatively marginal Japanese religious movement.[30]

The laicized styles of Zen discussed above might be called, to borrow a notion from Obeyesekere, "Protestant Zen" in so far as they strive to rationalize Zen practice through minimizing the importance of the pietistic, ritualistic, and sacramental dimensions of practice in favor of an instrumental or goal-directed approach.[31] At the same time, they actively mystify the goal, now conceived in terms of transcendent wisdom and ineffable meditative experience. Proponents of Protestant Zen are often antagonistic to the orthodox Rinzai and Sōtō institutions, proclaiming that traditional Zen is moribund and the priesthood lazy and uninspired. By emphazing the need to grasp the "essence" they justify discarding the "chaff," a category that includes the institutional, ceremonial, and scholastic dimensions of Zen to which the laity had long been denied access.

The similarity with the Buddhist reform movements of Southeast Asia is striking. Like Zen, Theravāda *vipassanā* revivals would emphasize the decadence of the clergy, the importance of meditation, and the availability of ineffable enlightenment experiences to both laymen and monks alike. The Theravāda reforms, like the Buddhist reforms in Japan, must be seen in the context of the major ideological changes precipitated by the forces of urbanization, modernization, and the spread of Western style education, all of which contributed to the rise of Protestant Buddhism. Fortunately, the Theravāda reforms have been the subject of a number of recent studies, and thus a brief overview is all that will be required here.[32]

The influence of the Occident in the recreation of Theravāda Buddhism is most evident in Burma and Sri Lanka, both of which were subject to periods of

colonial rule. The bureaucratic needs of the colonial administration, coupled with the spread of Western style schools run by Christian missionaries, gave rise to an English educated middle-class, thoroughly inculcated in the values of their colonial mentors. This newly emergent Westernized class found themselves increasingly alienated from their cultural roots, yet at the same time they were precluded from full membership in the society of their English governors.

This Anglicized elite found itself in much the same situation as the Japanese intellectuals of the Meiji, who also availed themselves of a European style education and had come to admire Western scientific achievements. It is true, of course, that the Japanese were not themselves subject to colonial rule. Nevertheless, the experiences of Japanese intellectuals who had gone abroad and witnessed firsthand the cultural chauvinism of the West, and the experience of repeated diplomatic failure following the Japanese military victories over the Chinese in 1895 and the Russians in 1905, convinced the Japanese that they would never gain the respect of the West despite their efforts to emulate Western ways. As mentioned above, Meiji leaders responded to the insecurity of this situation by touting the cultural and spiritual superiority of Japan, despite the fact that the forms of "traditional Japanese culture" to which they turned were all too often recast in a Western mold.

The Sri Lankan and Burmese elites responded to their colonial situation in much the same way, reasserting their traditional cultural and spiritual heritage under the banner of Theravāda Buddhism. Buddhism thus became the vehicle through which they affirmed their national identities, their cultural values, and their self-esteem. But the Buddhism of the new urban middle-class was far from the traditional Buddhism of the village. Like Meiji New Buddhism, Theravāda was refashioned in the image of post-Englightenment Christianity. In brief, the Theravāda reform emphasized: (1) the values of individualism, which included the affirmation of worldly achievement coupled with "this-worldly asceticism;" (2) a rational or "instrumental" approach to Buddhist teachings, which often involved the repudiation of the "supernatural" or "magical" aspects of Buddhism, the rejection of "empty" ritual, and the insistence that Buddhism is a "philosophy" rather than a "religion;" (3) a new "universalism," accompanied by a rejection of the authority of the clergy; and (4) a renewed interest in the scriptural legacy of Theravāda Buddhism.[33] Indeed, Pāli scriptural materials, previously unavailable to Buddhist laity and largely ignored by the poorly educated *saṃgha*, would be used to legitimize the host of reforms associated with the Buddhist revival.

Ironically, access to the Pāli canon was made possible largely by the efforts of Western Orientalists. Prior to the nineteenth century, Pāli texts were generally unavailable in vernacular languages, or even in vernacular scripts. The impetus for Pāli studies came from British Orientalists, notably T.W. Rhys Davids, a colonial administrator in Sri Lanka who founded the Pāli Text Society in London in 1881. Many of the early subscribers to the Pāli Text Society were educated lay Sinhalese who had no access to the Buddhist canon prior to the

publication of English translations around the turn of the century (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 210).

Even more critical to the Theravāda revival were the Theosophists. Colonel Henry Olcott and Madame Blavatsky, who formed the Theosophical Society in 1875, arrived in Sri Lanka in May 1880 and soon thereafter inaugurated the Buddhist Theosophical Society. This society constituted the first lay-Buddhist organization that was wholly independent of the temples and monastic hierarchy. Blavatsky and Olcott lobbied the colonial government on behalf of the Buddhist cause with great success. They also trained a generation of native Buddhist leaders, providing them with the intellectual means to defend themselves in debate with Christian missionaries. Olcott's work was continued by his Sri Lankan protégé, Anagārika Dharmapāla, who founded the Maha Bodhi Society in 1891 in order to promote the Theravāda revival in India as well as in Sri Lanka. Dharmapāla was to become the Asian spokesman for Theravāda in the West, representing his thoroughly Anglicized version of "original Buddhism" to the Chicago World Parliament of Religions in 1883.

It is in the context of this Western influenced Buddhist reformation that we must come to understand the so-called *vipassanā* revival in Southeast Asia. Again, I would reiterate that the practice of Buddhist meditation, even among the *saṃgha*, is not widely attested in the premodern period. Walpola Rahula has shown, for example, that by the first century B.C. the Sri Lankan *saṃgha* had come to conceive of its vocation as one of scriptural study rather than practice, and by the sixth century A.D. "Sri Lankan Buddhism had decisively rejected the ascetic hermit (*tapassi*) in favor of the village-and-town-dwelling monks."[34] While there may have been a limited tradition of meditation maintained within the *saṃgha* in Sri Lanka up until the colonial period, this tradition was evidently moribund by the end of the nineteenth century (Bechert 1966). In the course of his study of forest-monk hermitages in Sri Lanka—the tradition most closely associated with the practice of meditation—Carrithers found that "of the approximately 150 hermitages ... now in Ceylon, all but a very small handful have appeared since 1950" (Carrithers 1983: 11). Moreover, of the remaining centers, none were older than 100 years, and the relative youth of the movement can be seen in the fact that the founders of most of the hermitages were still alive in the 1970s. Even those scholars who suggest that there may be some continuity between the contemporary Sri Lankan forest-monk tradition and traditions going back to an earlier eighteenth-century revival concede that the style of meditation associated with the earlier tradition is very different from the methods popular in the burgeoning *vipassanā* movement of today.[35]

Turning to Thailand, Tambiah suggests that there is "some evidence of an entrenched meditative tradition ... extending back at least to the Ayudhyā period," citing as evidence the *Manual of a Mystic*—a short manuscript most likely composed around the middle of the eighteenth century (Tambiah 1984: 70). But again, this treatise is prescriptive and liturgical in nature, and provides no evidence that there were monks who seriously strove to achieve the exalted

stages enumerated therein (see Woodward 1970). Tambiah himself traces the modern *indigenous* Thai meditation tradition back to Phra Acharn Mun (1870–1949), a highly respected teacher considered by many to have reached the fourth and final stage of sainthood (*arahat*).[36] While Acharn Mun may have studied with earlier teachers (notably a certain Phra Acharn Sao Kantasilo of Wat Liab), the meditation technique that Mun developed, consisting of continual contemplation of the mind and body, was largely his own. Indeed, his biography suggests that none of his contemporaries were interested in "introspective" methods of meditation, as opposed to "external" methods such as the contemplation of corpses (Tambiah 1984: 84). One of Acharn Mun's most celebrated disciples, Acharn Chā, has been responsible for training a large number of Western students, including several who have gone on to become *vipassanā* teachers in the West.[37]

As influential as Acharn Mun may have been, the majority of *vipassanā* practitioners in Thailand today follow a style of practice imported from Burma. Contemporary Burmese interest in meditation is itself often traced to Ledi Sayādaw (Saya Dala Thet, 1846–1923), a monk of tremendous learning who authored over seventy treatises on Pāli Buddhism.[38] Ledi Sayādaw is noted for having encouraged the study of Buddhism among the laity, establishing centers throughout Burma at which lay Buddhists as well as monks could study *abhidhamma* and practice meditation. A number of contemporary Burmese lay-meditation movements claim to derive from Ledi Sayādaw, notably the tradition established by U Ba Khin (1898–1971).[39]

However, the method that has proven most influential—the so-called "New Burmese method"—was apparently initiated by U Nārada, also known as Mingun Jetavana Sayādaw, Nārada developed his method from his own study of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, undertaken at the behest of a monk he met in the hills of Sagaing. "From his own experience [Nārada] developed the principles and the details of the practice that formed the basis for those who followed him as his direct or indirect disciples" (Nyanaponika 1970:86).

Most important among Nārada's disciplines was Bhadanta Sobhana Mahathera, better known as Mahāsī Sayādaw (1904–1982). As part of the pro-Buddhist policies of the newly independent Burmese government, Mahāsī was invited to Rangoon in 1949 by the Prime Minister U Nu to take charge of Thathana Yeiktha, a new government-sponsored meditation center open to the laity (Mahāsī Sayādaw 1971). The technique promoted by Mahāsī at Thathana Yeiktha proved to be a tremendous success; as of 1973 some 15,000 students are said to have trained there (Sole-Leris 1986: 129). Mahāsī's disciples have since disseminated his method throughout South and Southeast Asia, Europe, and America, and when Westerners speak of *vipassanā* today they are often referring to the specific style of practice popularized by Mahāsī.

There is no need to detail the Mahāsī method here—any number of descriptions and first-person accounts are now available in English.[40] For our purposes it is only necessary two highlight two features of Mahāsī's teaching: first,

Mahāsī's technique claims to provide the practitioner direct entry into the path of *vipassanā* (insight into the Buddhist truths) without the need for prior training in concentration exercises (*samatha*) or mastery of advanced states of meditative trance (*jhāna*). This is most significant, as the foundation of Buddhist meditation, according to canonical sources, is the development of *samatha*—a task that requires a long and arduous course of training. Mahāsī naturally insists that a focused and concentrated mind is required in order to progress in *vipassanā*, but the degree of concentration required in order to succeed at his technique is small according to traditional reckoning.[41] Moreover, the requisite skill in *samatha* can be achieved in the course of one's *vipassanā* practice, obviating the need for preparatory *samatha* exercises, and thereby foreshortening and simplifying the path.

The second key feature of the Mahāsī method is the promise of quick results: "It will not take long to achieve the object, but possibly in a month, or twenty days, or fifteen days; or on rare occasions even in seven days for a selected few with extraordinary Perfection" (Mahāsī Sayādaw 1971: preface). The "object" of which Mahāsī speaks is none other than the experience of *nibbāna*. The initial "taste" of *nibbāna* signals the attainment of *sotāpatti*—the first of four levels of enlightenment—which renders the meditator a "noble person" (*ariya-puggala*) destined for release from the wheel of existence (*saṃsāra*) in relatively short order. The claim that *nibbāna* can be reached in the course of a month or less is truly remarkable, given the widespread view among the traditionalists that it is almost impossible for anyone to become an *ariya-puggala* in modern times. Hundreds of Mahāsī's followers are believed to have reached the first stage of enlightenment, and many are thought to have attained the higher stages as well.[42] As one can imagine, this has been a point of some controversy within the Theravāda world, an issue to which we will return below.

The Mahāsī Sayādaw method is the one most widely followed in Sri Lanka today.[43] The technique seems to have been introduced there as early as 1939, but it was not until the arrival of three Burmese monks in 1955, at the invitation of the Sri Lankan prime minister, that the method became popular.[44] (The Sri Lankan government, like the Burmese government, was preparing at the time for the 1956 celebrations of the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's death, and the Mahāsī method was given the official endorsement of both governments.) A number of Mahāsī's followers have also become prominent teachers in Thailand and India.

Mahāsī Sayādaw provided the Theravāda world with more than simply an easy-to-learn meditation technique; he also provided a model of an urban meditation center that became a catalyst for the spread of meditation among the laity.[45] One cannot overemphasize the significance of this development: Buddhists traditionally held that meditation was a risky business that should be undertaken only under proper supervision, i.e., within the confines of the *saṃgha*. Prior to the modern period there was virtually no opportunity for laypersons to study meditation; indeed, as I have emphasized above, meditation

practice was rare even within the *saṃgha*. Yet in the new climate of Protestant Buddhism, eminent meditation masters rushed to provide facilities for lay practitioners. They established networks of retreat centers staffed with their disciples in which laypersons and visiting foreigners could practice *vipassanā* alongside ordained monks.[46] In order to compete, even the more traditionally minded temples were often obliged to offer meditation classes for their lay patrons (Bond 1988: 173). Gombrich and Obeyesekere consider the spread of meditation among the laity to be the "greatest single change to have come over Buddhism in Sri Lanka (and indeed in the other Theravāda countries) since the Second World War."[47]

Note that the very notion of a Buddhist "meditation center" was unknown before this century. Gombrich suggests that the term used in Sri Lanka to refer to such establishments—*bhāvanā madhyasthāna*—was coined after the Second World War as a literal Sanskrit translation of the English term "meditation center." "This linguistic detail mirrors a cultural trend: the institution of the meditation centre is an import, and one due largely ... to western influence" (Gombrich 1983: 20). The spread of lay practice in turn engendered a radically new idea in the history of Buddhism, namely, that "every Buddhist should seek his own salvation in this life, which in turn means that he should practise meditation" (Gombrich 1983: 21).

The laicization of meditation both encouraged and sustained the anti-clerical sentiments of the Buddhist reformers—sentiments imbibed in large part from the coterie of English administrators and Christian missionaries who oversaw education during the colonial period. The clergy were no longer seen as having a unique purchase on Buddhist teachings. Through the efforts of European scholars the Pāli scriptures had become available to the laity in English translation. As the laity turned to lay scholars and foreign teachers for help in interpreting the scriptural corpus, they had less interest in the traditional preaching of the monks.[48] Moreover, with the spread of meditation instruction in urban centers, and the widespread belief that lay meditators were routinely achieving exalted stages on the Buddhist path, the laity were no longer inclined to look upon the clergy as their spiritual superiors. The wisdom of the Buddha—indeed, the liberating *experience* of the Buddha—was made available to all.

By rendering the essence of Buddhism an "experience," the laity successfully wrested authority over the doctrine away from the clergy. The guarantee of orthodoxy was no longer rigorous adherence to the monastic code (*vinaya*), but rather a firsthand experience of the fruit of meditation—*nirvāṇa*. Meditation instructors with little or no formal training in canonical exegesis were free to pontificate on the meaning of Buddhist scriptures, or, alternatively, to reject the need for scriptural learning altogether. With the elevation of meditative experience, the abstruse scholastic philosophy of the *abhidhamma* came to be construed as an eminently empirical analysis of the world garnered through meditative insight. As such, one need not read the voluminous *abhidhamma* treatises to become familiar with their contents, and there are popular stories of

illiterate practitioners with no prior doctrinal training who, after becoming *arahats* through meditative practice, correctly answered questions on abstruse points of doctrine posed by learned monks and scholars.[49]

As meditative practice became increasingly laicized, and the emphasis came to rest on a series of supermundane experiences attained through meditative practice, the ideology of meditation changed dramatically. "Meditation" had traditionally comprised the reenactment of the Buddha's spiritual exertions through the ritual recitation of meditation liturgies. Such exercises were typically performed in order to acquire merit and attain a more fortunate rebirth. The *vipassanā* revival, coupled with the "Protestant" ideology of the Theravāda reforms, had the effect of rationalizing meditation; meditation was now conceived not as the ritual instantiation of Buddhahood, nor as a means to accumulate merit, but rather as a "mental discipline" designed to engender a particular transformative experience. The rationalization of meditation, coupled with the Westernized values of the middle-class patrons of urban meditation centers, led naturally to a deemphasis on the traditional soteriological goal—bringing an end to rebirth. Instead, we find an increasing emphasis on the worldly benefits of meditation: *vipassanā* was said to increase physical and psychological health, to alleviate stress, to help one deal more effectively with family and business relationships, and so on. This represents the final collapse of the traditional distinction between mundane and supermundane goals—the distinction that served to legitimize the institution of the lay-supported *saṃgha*.[50]

The similarity between the lay Zen in post-Meiji Japan and the *vipassanā* revivals in Southeast Asia is striking, but not, perhaps, surprising. Indeed, analogous movements have altered the face of Buddhism in Korea and Vietnam as well.[51] In each case, the threat posed by the wholesale imposition of Western values prompted Asian intellectuals to turn anew to their own cultural heritage so as to affirm and elevate their indigenous spiritual traditions. At the same time, these "indigenous" traditions were reconstituted so as to appropriate the perceived strengths of the Occident. This took the form of various reform movements that tended to reiterate the iconoclastic, anti-institutional, anti-clerical, and anti-ritual strategies of the European Enlightenment. As the reformers would have it, "true" Buddhism is not to be sought in moribund institutions, empty rituals, or dusty scriptures, but rather in a living experience. Buddhism properly understood is not a religion at all, but rather a spiritual technology providing the means to liberating insight and personal transformation. By rendering the essence of Buddhism a non-discursive spiritual experience, Buddhist apologists effectively positioned their tradition beyond the compass of secular critique.

The politics of experience

In the interests of demonstrating the need for a performative approach to the Buddhist rhetoric of experience, I have argued that the emphasis on meditative

experience in Buddhism may well be of recent provenance, a product of twentieth-century reforms inspired in part by Occidental models. This does not rule out the possibility, of course, that at least some monks in times past did in fact experience what we might refer to as "altered states of consciousness," "transformative insights," "mystical experiences," or what have you in the course of their monastic practice. (Presumably, this more likely would have been true of *dhutaṅga* monks—ascetics in the forest-monk tradition.) Moreover, there would appear to be ample evidence that those involved in the *vipassanā* revival, or those training under Zen teachers in the Sanbōkyōdan lineage, do experience *something* that they are wont to call *sotāpatti, jhāna*, or *satori*. I readily concede this point; indeed, it would be surprising if those who subjected themselves to the rigors of a Buddhist meditation retreat, which can involve upwards of fourteen hours of meditation a day in an excruciatingly uncomfortable cross-legged posture, sometimes in an underground cell utterly devoid of sound and light, would *not* undergo some unusual and potentially transformative experiences.

My point is rather that such private episodes do not constitute the reference points for the elaborate discourse on meditative states found in Buddhist scholastic sources. In other words, terms such as *samatha, vipassanā, sotāpatti*, and *satori* are not rendered sensible by virtue of the fact that they refer to clearly delimited "experiences" shared by Buddhist practitioners. Rather, the meaning of such terminology must be sought in the polemic and ideological context in which Buddhist meditation is carried out. Once again, the most compelling arguments are not theoretical, but rather ethnographic.

Most of the practices that go under the rubric of *vipassanā* today claim to be based on the two *Satipaṭṭhāna-suttas* ("Scripture on the Foundations of Mindfulness") typically used in conjunction with the *Visuddhimagga*.[52] The *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, however, poses a host of philological problems that render it amenable to a wide range of interpretations. Thus, when it comes to the practical application of the *sutta*, there is considerable difference of opinion among various contemporary *vipassanā* teachers. While all teachers readily concede that the aim of *vipassanā* exercises is to develop "mindfulness" (*sati*), there is much disagreement concerning the precise meaning of mindfulness and the procedures most conductive to fostering it.

Debates over technique frequently employ the all-important doctrinal distinction between *samatha* and *vipassanā*—concentration and insight. It is believed that virtually all Buddhist and non-Buddhist meditative techniques and experiences can be classified according to this broad schema. Indeed, the rubric of *samatha* and *vipassanā* has been appropriated by some Western scholars interested in a universal phenomenology and typology of meditation and mystical states. A number of scholars have adopted this rubric in their attempt to analyze and classify non-Buddhist phenomena, relating *samatha* to "enstasis," for example, and *vipassanā* to "ecstasis," in the hope of deducing a cause-and-effect relationship between a particular religious discipline and its psychological consequences.[53]

This is not the place to deal with the issue of whether or not the contemporary use of the *samatha-vipassanā* distinction conforms to the prescriptive models found in the Buddhist canon. In fact, there are serious discrepancies in the prescriptive accounts themselves: the description of the first *jhāna*, for example, differs depending on whether one turns to the *Nikāya* accounts, the Abhidhamma, or Buddhaghosa.[54] This alone should give pause to those who would read canonical formulations as ostensive descriptions of meditative states.

Of more pressing concern to us is the manner in which these terms are employed by contemporary teachers, i.e., those who are presumed to have "tasted the fruits" of Buddhist meditation. While contemporary *vipassanā* masters may employ somewhat different techniques in guiding their students, one would presume that they speak a common language when it comes to the "phenomenology" of meditation. A broad consensus among experienced meditators as to the designation of a specific meditative state, even if they disagreed as to how best to achieve such a state, would suggest the existence of a phenomenal referent.[55]

In fact, there is anything but consensus: the designation of particular practices and the proper identification of meditative states that supposedly result from such practices are the subjects of continued and often acrimonious debate. The only area of agreement among *vipassanā* teachers is that *vipassanā* is superior to *samatha*, as the former alone leads to liberation. As a result, the techniques and experiences promoted by one's competitors are often deemed to be *samatha*, while one's own style of practice is invariably claimed to be *vipassanā*.

This is particularly striking, as the tradition would lead us to believe that there is a wide gulf separating *samatha* from *vipassanā*. The goal of *samatha*, according to scriptural sources, is an ascending series of four "material absorptions" (or "trances," *rūpa-jjhāna*) and a further series of four (or five) "immaterial absorptions" (*arūpa-jjhāna*). These states are held to be of an entirely different soteriological order than the states that are sought through *vipassanā*, namely the four *ariya-magga* which culminate in full enlightenment. One would suppose that since the soteriological ramifications of *jhāna* and *ariya-magga* diverge so markedly, the states would be easy to distinguish on phenomenological grounds. Yet, again, there is little agreement on this point. In the living tradition such terms are often used to disparage the teachings of rival teachers: meditation masters have been known to castigate their rivals by claiming that they ignorantly mistake *jhānic* absorptions for *sotāpatti*. Of course, this is but a variant of the claim that one's rival teaches *samatha* under the guise of *vipassanā*.

My comments here are based in part on my own observations and conversations with *vipassanā* teachers and students in South and Southeast Asia. Naturally, the teachers themselves, who are expected to be paragons of selflessness, compassion, and equanimity, are often hesitant to criticize their rivals in print. But the controversies that rage beneath the surface do occasionally break into the public sphere. Vimalo Bhikkhu, a Western monk who spent many years

training in Southeast Asia under a variety of teachers, is a good example of how the rhetoric of meditative states operates in practice:

> There are some meditation schools which claim that certain experiences occurring during the course of practice are the attainment of stream-entry [*sotāpatti*]. These often are remarkable meditation experiences but are in no way related to the true experience of stream-entry which is nothing other than the seeing of *Nibbāna*. Some schools of *vipassanā* meditation say that a particular experience in which the meditator loses consciousness is the experience of stream-entry. This may have some significance but the genuine experience of stream-entry is something quite different. Considering these various explanations of stream-entry it really does seem that the genuine experience has become rather rare. . . . The Buddha said that a *Sotāpanna* could not be reborn in the lower realms of existence and would certainly within seven life-times realize complete liberation. Because of this people, seeking security, imagine all sorts of insights and unusual experiences to be stream-entry and so delude themselves.
>
> (Vimalo n.d.: 64)

I do not know which teacher or teachers Vimalo may have had in mind; there are several that have been subject to criticism for being all too quick to confirm *sotāpatti* experiences, including Sunlun Sayādaw, Mahāsī Sayādaw, U Ba Khin, and their disciples. Just how quick can be seen in a pamphlet published by U Ba Khin's meditation center, entitled "Personal Experiences of Candidates (Buddhists and non-Buddhists)."[56] This pamphlet relates the case of a European businessman, "Mr. A.," who attained *sotāpatti* after only two days of training under U Ba Khin. U Ba Khin tested him, requiring that he "go into the fruition state (Phala) with a vow to rise up just after 5 minutes" (ibid.: 130). Mr. A. performed this task successfully, following which U Ba Khin tested him again, asking him to try it for fifteen minutes. Only when Mr. A. demonstrated that he could enter "Nibbāna" at will was U Ba Khin satisfied, since according to U Ba Khin's reading of the *Visuddhimagga*, "the real test as to whether one has become an Ariya lies in his ability to go in to the fruition state (Phala) as he may like" (ibid.: 131). U Ba Khin is aware, of course, that such a state bears a strong resemblance to *jhāna* absorption, but he assures us that "an experienced teacher alone will be able to differentiate between the two" (ibid.: 132).

While Vimalo refuses to name names in his denunciation of those who confuse "unusual experiences" with genuine attainment, other critics have not been as tactful. In Sri Lanka the Mahāsī method has been the subject of impassioned and somewhat rancorous attacks in various magazines and books ever since the late 1950s, i.e., from the time it first became popular.[57] Traditionalist monks such as Soma Thera, Kassapa Thera, and Kheminda Thera of the

Vajirārāma temple in Colombo "castigated [Mahāsī's Sri Lankan] centers for teaching unorthodox methods that threatened the true *Dhamma* and endangered both the institution of Buddhism and Buddhists themselves" (Bond 1988: 163). Kassapa Thera published a series of critical essays in a book entitled *Protection of the Sambuddha Sāsana* (1957) that attacked Mahāsī's use of the belly as a focal point for breathing meditation (*ānāpāna-sati*) rather than the tip of the nose, and Kheminda Thera objected to the method as an illegitimate "shortcut" that lacked canonical sanction.[58] In particular, Kheminda argues from scripture that trance (*jhāna*) and concentration (*samādhi*) must be acquired prior to the practice of *ripassanā*.

The defenders of Mahāsī's method argued from their own reading of the scriptures, which they insisted recognizes a category of practitioner who proceeds directly to *vipassanā*. They also cited as evidence the experience of yogis training under Mahāsī, and they suggested that their detractors "not rest content with the mere knowledge of the *samatha-yānika* method but instead practise it diligently until they attain *jhāna* together with *abhiññā*, as well as *ariya-bhūmi*."[59] Not surprisingly, the response of the traditionalists was to categorically reject the claims of their opponents to have realized legitimate stages on the path. Kassapa could argue, for example, that practitioners of the Mahāsī method "do not exhibit the calm, concentrated, happy look mentioned in the texts."[60] Moreover, some practitioners of the Mahāsī method were believed to have suffered serious psychological problems as a result of the Mahāsī technique (Bond 1988: 170). The traditionalists cited passages from Mahāsī's own writings that suggest that his method could give rise to "strange physical sensations, swaying, trembling, and even loss of consciousness."[61] Similar criticisms have been advanced from Western teachers as well. In an updated preface to the fifth edition of *A Survey of Buddhism*, Sangharakshita expressed his own reservations about the Mahāsī method, which he felt could lead to "extreme nervous tension and to a schizoid state for which I coined the term 'alienated awareness.' On my return to England in 1964 I met twelve or fourteen people who were suffering from severe mental disturbance as a direct result of practising the so-called 'Vipassana Meditation.' Four or five others had to be confined to mental hospitals" (Sangharakshita 1980: xv).

Even Gombrich and Obeyesekere get into the act, suggesting that the technique taught by Mahāsī and the curious states that occasionally result from the technique are similar if not identical to "those used for entering trance states." They go on to suggest that many of the monks, nuns, and laypersons who use the Mahāsī method "have been learning a technique that, however in fact applied, could if followed to the letter take them into trance states very like possession" (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 454). In support of this claim, Gombrich and Obeyesekere describe cases in which one and the same "altered state of consciousness" is interpreted as possession in one context (indigenous Sri Lankan spirit religion), and meditative accomplishment in another (Sri Lankan Theravāda; ibid.: 56–59).

It should now be clear that there is no public consensus as to the application of terms that supposedly refer to discrete experiential states within the *vipassanā* movement. Not surprisingly, the same is found to be true in Japan, where Rinzai and Sōtō monks tend to reject altogether the veracity of claims by Sanbōkyōdan practitioners to have experienced *satori*. (Even teachers in the Sanbōkyōdan line concede that there are differences in the "clarity and depth" of their *satori* experiences, an admission that again begs the issue as to the "referent" of the term *satori* [Kapleau 1967: 191].) The lack of consensus among prominent Buddhist teachers as to the designation not only of particular states of consciousness, but also of the psychotropic techniques used to produce them (e.g., *samatha* versus *vipassanā*) belies the notion that the rhetoric of Buddhist meditative experience functions ostensively.[62] It is apparent that even within the living Buddhist tradition a particular experiential claim must be judged on the basis of the course of training that engendered the experience and the behavior that ensued.[63] Such judgments are based in turn on prior ideological commitments shaped by one's vocation (monk or layperson), one's socioeconomic background (urban middle-class or rural poor), one's political agenda (traditionalist or reformer), one's sectarian affiliation, one's education, and so on. In the end, the Buddhist rhetoric of meditative experience would appear to be both informed by, and wielded in, the interests of legitimation, authority, and power.

Means and ends

As stated at the beginning of this article, one of the problems plaguing academic accounts of religious experience in general, and Buddhist meditative experience in particular, is the refusal to critically scrutinize the term "experience" itself. The English word is clearly multivalent, assuming a host of different meanings according to context. For our purposes we only need focus upon two more-or-less distinct usages: (1) to directly encounter, participate in, or live through; and (2) to directly perceive, observe, be aware of, or be conscious of. Note that only in the second "epistemological" sense does the term "experience" insinuate an inner or private "mental event" that eludes public scrutiny.

There is little doubt that a host of Buddhist exegetes and reformers throughout Asian history exhorted individuals to personally engage in Buddhist practice, rather than to rest content with mere "book learning." This is clearly the intent of many Ch'an writings that arose in reaction to the scholasticism of schools such as T'ien-t'ai and Hua-yen. Ch'an teachers routinely assailed learned Buddhist scholiasts who knew the "score" but could not, or would not, "perform," just as a musician might criticize an opera critic who could not carry a tune.

Again, the injunction to *practice* Zen—to embody or instantiate the Buddhadharma by participation in monastic ceremony and ritual—is not equivalent to the injunction to attain some sort of enlightenment experience. Contrary to popular belief, the Ch'an/Zen tradition was deeply suspicious of strategies that

extolled "inner experience." An emphasis on personal and necessarily transient mental events reduces the sophisticated dialectic of Ch'an/Zen doctrine and praxis to a mere "means" or a set of techniques intended to inculcate such experiences. The reduction of practice to means is, in classical Ch'an terms, the sin of "gradualism" which errs in reifying Buddhahood. Not only do gradualist positions tend to reinforce craving and attachment (e.g., attachment to the path, or to the "goal" of enlightenment), but ironically, an instrumental approach to practice can actually serve to mitigate the need for practice altogether. This occurs the moment the notion that "the raft may be left behind upon reaching the other shore" is married to the Mahāyāna doctrine of universal and immanent Buddhahood. (If practice is merely a means to attain Buddhahood, and if we are all already Buddhas, then there is ultimately no need for religious training.) This is the "Alan Watts heresy," the logic of which renders all practice a form of attachment. While this position may pose as radical subitism, in reality it bespeaks of what traditional Ch'an exegetes would consider a misguided attempt to extirpate the gap between the two truths.[64]

There are, of course, a few premodern Ch'an and Zen masters who do appear to have emphasized a "flash of insight" or "moment of enlightenment" in their teaching, notably the Sung master Ta-hui Tsung-kao (1089–1163), and the Tokugawa Rinzai reformer inspired by Ta-hui, Hakuin Ekaku (1686–1769). A detailed analysis of their teachings lies beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that these two influential masters had a host of lay disciples, many of whom were prominent scholars and aristocrats with no formal affiliation with Buddhism. The emphasis on a transformative moment of insight is found not so much in the sermons delivered by these masters to their monastic congregations, as in letters and essays written for their lay disciples. The stress on "spiritual experience" found in their writings appear to be accommodations to the laity—a means of making Buddhist "wisdom" accessible to students who had neither the time nor the opportunity to participate in formal monastic training. Such "conversion experiences" might be fine for lay patrons, but they were never considered full-fledged substitutes for monastic discipline.

There are thus interesting parallels between the strategies used by Ta-hui and Hakuin for handling lay disciples, and the strategies employed by the leaders of the modern lay-meditation movements examined above. By rendering Buddhist wisdom a mental event as opposed to an acquired skill, the rigors of monastic training could be circumvented. Moreover, in an age that construes religious ritual as "bad science," Buddhist religious discipline could be reconfigured as psychotherapy: Buddhist practice is thus rendered a rational attempt to alter our perception and response to the world, rather than a "magical" attempt to alter the world as such.

This strategy has enjoyed considerable success, not only in adapting Buddhism for survival in an increasingly urbanized and secularized Asia, but also in winning respectability for Buddhism among a variety of Western intellectuals and scholars. Westerners were attracted to Buddhism and Buddhist meditation

by the promise of epistemological certainty acquired through systematic meditative training leading to exalted numinous states. The rhetoric of *upāya* (skillful means) provided Western enthusiasts with the tool they needed to shape Buddhism to their own liking: since the scriptural, ritual, and institutional forms of Buddhism were mere "skillful means" they could be abandoned at will once the centrality of meditative experience was fully appreciated.

Historians of Buddhism must be particularly circumspect in wielding the hermeneutic of *upāya*. The concept was first used to justify the intentional misreading of the early Buddhist canon in order to appropriate and subordinate Hīnayāna teachings to the new Mahāyāna revelation. The rhetorical maneuver of *upāya* inevitably lies in the interests of a hegemonic and universalizing discourse—invoking *upāya* allows the usurper to disavow difference and rupture, while arrogating the right to speak for the displaced other. ("The Buddha did not really mean what he said. What he meant was . . .") Scholars of Buddhism must be wary lest such patently "theological" strategies come to substitute for critical historiographic and ethnographic reconstruction.

The indeterminacy of experience

The urge to reduce the goal of Buddhist praxis to a mode of non-discursive experience would seem to arise when alternative strategies of legitimation, such as the appeal to institutional or scriptural authority, prove inadequate. Breakdowns in traditional systems of authority may in turn result from a variety of historical and socioeconomic circumstances. The situation encountered repeatedly above involved an Asian nation coming into sustained contact with the culture, science, and philosophy of the West. Such contact brought in its wake the scourge of cultural relativism. By privileging private spiritual experience Buddhist apologists sought to secure the integrity of Buddhism by grounding it in a trans-cultural, trans-historical reality immune to the relativist critique.

The central feature of private experience that allowed it to play this role is precisely its unremitting indeterminacy. Indeed, Buddhist meditative experience is often circumscribed in terms of its "non-discursive" or "non-intellectual" character. (Note the mischief at work here: the fact that nothing can be said of a particular experience—i.e., its ineffability—cannot in and of itself constitute a delimiting characteristic.) At the same time, the rhetoric of experience tacitly posits a "place" where signification comes to an end, variously styled "mind," "pure consciousness," the "mirror of nature," or what have you. The category "experience" is, in essence, a mere placeholder that entails a substantive if indeterminate terminus for the relentless deferral of meaning. And this is precisely what makes the term so amenable to Buddhist ideological appropriation.

The Buddhist strategy involves extolling experience as a superior form of knowledge, i.e., superior to "second-hand" knowledge gleaned from teachers or texts. Second-hand knowledge is invariably fickle, being subject to the vagaries of interpretation, not to mention the threat of empirical refutation. In contrast,

first-hand experience—construed as that which is "immediately present"—is both irrefutable and indubitable. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of Buddhist "enlightenment experiences," according to traditional sources, is precisely the elimination of doubt. Yet ironically, such certainty can be gained only at the expense of discursive meaning and signification. This contributes to the confusions and controversies that plague many of the modern Buddhist revival movements mentioned above.

One way to mask the indeterminacy of "private mental events" is by insisting on an isomorphic relationship between meditative procedure and meditative experience. We have seen that the identification of a particular altered state is often determined by a critical appraisal of the technique that occasioned it. Moreover, contemporary exegetes use terms such as *vipassanā* and *samatha* to refer both to specific meditative techniques and to the states they supposedly engender, thereby finessing the logical gap that separates them. In etic terms, Buddhist meditation might best be seen as the ritualization of experience: it doesn't engender a specific experiential state so much as it *enacts* it. In this sense Buddhist *mārga* treatises are not so much maps of inner psychic space as they are scripts for the performance of an eminently public religious drama.

The public nature of Buddhist meditative ritual is readily confirmed when we attend to the emphasis placed on the formal authentication and certification of so-called enlightenment experiences—a convention somewhat at odds with the dogma that enlightenment obviates doubt. The legitimacy and orthodoxy of a particular meditative experience is guaranteed not only by strict adherence to prescribed technique, but also by ceremonial acts intended to "authorize" or "certify" one's spiritual accomplishment to the community at large. In sects where experience has become the exclusive criteria for assessing one's spiritual development (as opposed to doctrinal learning, ritual mastery, or vocational maturity), such rituals take on paramount importance. Thus the Sanbōkyōdan has instituted a ritual held at the end of meditation retreats in which those who experienced *satori* are brought before the entire congregation and later presented with a diploma certifying their accomplishment.

In Southeast Asia authentication often requires the complicity of scriptural exegetes who are called upon to attest to the orthodoxy of one's meditative accomplishment. Buddhist saints (meditation virtuosos) are examined on their spontaneous apprehension of Buddhist doctrine—an apprehension supposedly gained not through prolonged textual study but rather through their direct perception of the workings of psycho-physical reality. There is thus a symbiotic if not collusive relationship between specialists in doctrine and specialists in meditation: while meditation masters require scholarmonks to attest to the legitimacy of their experiences, scholarmonks need meditation masters to experientially verify the truth of the teachings enshrined in the scriptures. In this case the rhetoric of experience is wielded in a ritualized examination that does not wrest control from the scripturalists, but rather bears witness to the "empirical" foundations of the canonical tradition.

Such public enactments of enlightenment—ceremonial affirmations of the reality of *nirvāṇa* in the here and now—constitute the proper domain in which to situate the Buddhist rhetoric of experience. Whatever ineffable experiences might transpire in the minds of Buddhist meditators, such events do not, and indeed cannot, impinge upon the ideologically charged public discourse concerning experience and enlightenment. This brings us back to Frank Ramsey's laconic critique of Wittgenstein which I used as an epigraph to this article: "what we can't say we can't say and we can't whistle either." The Buddhists, it would seem, are no better at whistling than are we.

Notes

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1 Conze 1967: 213. Conze is confident enough to declare that he "cannot imagine any scholar wishing to challenge this methodological postulate."

2 While I use the more "generic" Sanskrit here (*śamatha, vipaśyanā*, etc.), when dealing with contemporary Theravāda reform movements below I use the equivalent Pāli terms (*samatha, vipassanā*).

3 See, for example, the essays in Katz ed. 1978, 1983, and 1992; Forman ed. 1990; as well as Barnard 1992; Forman 1993; Katz 1882 and 1985; King 1988; Proudfoot 1985; Scholem 1969: 5–31; Shear 1994; and Smart 1977.

4 In so far as Buddhist material can be seen as contributing to this debate, I feel that Gimello has cogently shown that advanced Buddhist meditation involves a discriminative or analytic component; Buddhist *vipaśyanā* meditation "consists in the meditatively intensified reflection upon the basic categories of Buddhist doctrine and in the application of them to the data of meditative experience. . . . The final key to liberation for the Buddhist lies with this analytic destruction of false views (Gimello 1978: 188; see also Gimello 1983). I will briefly return to Gimello's analysis below.

5 On projection and transference in the study of Buddhism see esp. the analysis in Faure 1991.

6 Apropos of Herrigel's "romanticism," note that he joined the Nazi party soon after his return to Germany, and he remained loyal to the Nazi cause throughout the course of the war (Scholem 1961: 96).

7 This constitutes number 7 in the Mahāsāṃghika list of *pācattika* offenses, and number 8 in the corresponding Mūlasarvāstivādin list of *pāyantika* offenses (Prebish 1975: 74–75). On the effects of this prohibition in contemporary Sŏn monasticism see Buswell 1992: 10.

8 John Strong makes the same point with regard to the Buddhist *duṣkṛta* offence, which prohibits Buddhist monks from performing magical feats in public (Strong 1979: 75); see also the discussion in Faure 1991: 103.

9 For a full account see Griffiths 1986 and 1990.

10 There are, of course, several varieties of Western idealism that share aspects of Mahāyāna idealism, yet that make no appeal to privileged meditative insight (Berkeley and Hegel come to mind). Note that Schmithausen goes on to cite the *Pratyutpannasamādhisūtra* in support of his thesis, paraphrasing from the text as follows: "Just

as a man, awaking from a dream, comprehends that all phenomena are illusory like dream visions, in the same way the reflection of the Bodhisattva who understands that in his meditation he did not really meet the Buddha culminates in the intuition of universal ideality" (Schmithausen 1976: 246). Remarkably, Schmithausen cites this text in support of his claim that, "the thesis of universal idealism originated from the *generalization* of a situation observed in the case of objects visualized in meditative concentration, i.e., in the context of *spiritual practice*" (ibid.: 247). Yet this scripture suggests quite the opposite, in so far as it succeeds in explicating a doctrinal point by drawing an analogy to dreaming—an experience common to all irrespective of one's spiritual practice.

11 I am not the first to draw attention to this; Donald Lopez and Johannes Bronkhorst have made similar observations concerning the nature of Buddhist textual sources (see Lopez 1992: 148, and Bronkhorst 1993). This remains a minority position, however, among scholars of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism.

12 A relatively comprehensive list of such attainments can be found in the *Iddhividhaniddesa* chapter of the *Visuddhimagga*; see Buddhaghosa 1976: 409–471.

13 See the comments in Halbfass 1988: 393.

14 See Buddhaghosa 1976: 1.477, and the translator's comments, p. xix.

15 See the comments to this effect in McRae 1992: 349. Note that Chih-i's editor, Kuan-ting (561–632), is now considered to have had a major role in shaping this text, drawing freely from the writings of the San-lun exegete Chi-tsang (549–623). Kuan-ting's preface claims that Chih-i expounded on the dharma teachings that Chih-i "practiced in his own mind" (T.1911: 46.1b13). No such claim, however, is to be found in the body of the work itself. Moreover, orthodox T'ien-t'ai commentators concede that Chih-i did not attain a particularly high spiritual rank during his lifetime. (See, for example, Chan-jan's *Chih-kuan fu-hsing ch'uan-hung chüeh*, T.1912: 46.148c11–12.)

16 It is noteworthy that the few major figures in this area who do claim to speak from personal experience, such as Aldous Huxley, tend to rely upon psychotropic drugs to induce their "mystical experiences." In the current context this begs the issue—there is no *prima facie* reason to associate drug-induced "altered states of consciousness" with the purported goals of Buddhist praxis.

17 On the manner in which Buddhist sūtras were treated as cult objects see esp. Schopen 1975.

18 See, for example, Carrithers 1983: 222–223, and Gombrich 1971: 322.

19 Gombrich 1971: 322; see also the overviews in Bunnag 1973; Gunawardana 1979; Malalgoda 1976; Mendelson 1975; Obeyesekere 1981; Spiro 1970; and Tambiah 1970, 1976, and 1984.

20 See, for example, Bond 1988; Carrithers 1983; and Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988.

21 On this traditional distinction see esp. Gombrich 1971: 269.

22 See Carrithers 1983: 19. Carrithers is to be lauded for debunking the notion that "the founding of the hermitages [in Sri Lanka] was informed by the monks' experience in meditation." He says that this "totally wrong" presupposition "rests upon the notion of the primacy of religious experiences, preferably spectacular ones, as the origin and legitimation of religious action. But this presupposition has a natural home, not in Buddhism, but in Christian and especially Protestant Christian movements, which prescribe a radical conversion experience as the basis of Church membership" (ibid.: 18). Carrithers equivocates, however, when he comes to analyze the nature of Theravāda meditation techniques. On the one hand, he rejects "an extreme view of the ineffability of the spoken word and of the uniqueness of experience, or of historical relativity" (ibid.: 223–224), and he seems willing to accept certain fundamental claims made on behalf of the Theravāda system: "To practice insight meditation is to

see—or perhaps better, to *discover*—the psychological realities described in Buddhist doctrine in one's own experience" (ibid.: 226). On the other hand, he concedes that there are difficulties entailed in "connecting [Buddhist] doctrinal categories with immediate experience" (ibid.: 229).

23 As William Bodiford has pointed out, Manzan Dōhaku (1636–1714), the Tokugawa Sōtō reformer, cited none other than the founder of Japanese Sōtō Zen, Dōgen (1200–1253), when arguing that "dharma transmission can occur whether or not the disciple is enlightened" (Bodiford 1991: 144). Manzan further rejected the notion of a "self-enlightened Zen Master," since this would imply a rejection of the central Buddhist teaching of causality (ibid.). It would be a mistake to think of Manzan's reforms as the unfortunate result of a long process of "routinization" or "ritualization": the fact is that Ch'an/Zen "dharma inheritance" entailed the transmission of nothing less than the Buddha-mind, which, according to the logic of Ch'an/Zen doctrine, is already possessed by all. As such, formal transmission actually involved the ritual investiture of a student in an institutionally certified genealogy (see Foulk and Sharf 1993/94).

24 Sections of the following discussion on Meiji Buddhism and D.T. Suzuki's "Zen" are taken directly from my article "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism" (Sharf 1995a); see also Sharf 1995b.

25 Nishida 1965–66: 1.9; trans. Dilworth 1969: 95–96.

26 This exalted experience was also, according to Suzuki, the essence of all Japanese cultural artifacts—a claim that had the effect of "spiritualizing" the nation as a whole. See the full discussion in Sharf 1995a.

27 The Society's name was arrived at as follows: " 'F' stands for the *F*ormless self awakening itself, 'A' for taking the standpoint of *A*ll humankind, and 'S' for creating Suprahistorical history" (*FAS Society Journal* Autumn 1987, 18).

28 A more comprehensive description of the F.A.S. society can be found in Sharf 1995a.

29 See Sharf n.d. for a full discussion of these issues.

30 Yasutani himseif took a great interest in training Westerners, and his interest was continued by his successor, Yamada Kōun (1907–1989). Both Yasutani and Yamada made a number of trips to the West, certifying many Western disciples as authorized teachers in their lineage. The Zen teachings of H.M. Enomiya-Lassalle (1898–1990), Philip Kapleau (1912–), Robert Aitken (1917–), Maezumi Taizan (1930–), and Eido Tai Shimano (1932–), bear the imprint of Yasutani's tutelage. Enomiya-Lassalle was the first to hold Zen retreats in Germany, and continued to be active as a Zen teacher in Europe and Japan until his death in 1990. The latter four each went on to establish Zen training centers in the United States.

31 Obeyesekere coined the term "Protestant Buddhism" in 1970 in a discussion of the revival of Theravāda in late nineteenth-century Ceylon (Obeyesekere 1970).

32 See esp. Bond 1988; Carrithers 1983; Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988; and Malalgoda 1976.

33 For a detailed analysis of the characteristics of the Theravāda reforms see esp. Ames 1963; Bond 1988; and Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988.

34 Tambiah 1984: 54, citing Rahula 1956: 158.

35 The earlier revival was stimulated by monks coming to Sri Lanka from Siam to teach meditation. The techniques would have involved contemplation of the qualities of the Buddha, contemplation of the thirty-two parts of the body, and so on. See the comments in Gombrich 1971: 281–282, and Tambiah 1984: 58–59.

36 See his biography in Phra Acharn Maha Boowa Hyanasampanno 1976, and the study by Tambiah 1984: 81–110.

37 Among them are Jack Kornfield, author of *Living Buddhist Masters* (1977), and Sumedho Bhikku, founder of Chithurst Forest Monastery in Hampshire, England. See

also Ward 1990, for an engaging account of daily life in a branch monastery established by Acharn Chā specifically for training foreigners.

38 A brief biography and English translations of eight of his manuals can be found in Ledi Sayadaw 1965.

39 U Ba Khin, who served in a number of important posts in U Nu's post-independence government, studied meditation under the layman Saya Thet Gyi, a student of Ledi Sayādaw. U Ba Khin apparently experimented with different techniques throughout his career, all of which focused primarily on bodily sensations. He established a small meditation center in a suburb of Rangoon in 1952, where he trained lay Burmese as well as foreigners. Due to the influence of some of his foreign disciples, his technique has become far better known in the West than it is in his native Burma. S.N. Goenka (1924–) has been particularly active, establishing meditation centers in India, America, and Australia, and leading lay retreats throughout the world. For brief biographies of U Ba Khin and Goenka, as well as descriptions of their technique, see King 1980: 125–132; Nottingham 1960; and Sole-Leris 1986: 136–153.

40 See for example, Kornfield 1977: 51–81; Mahāsī Sayādaw 1971; Nyanaponika 1970 and 1972; and Shattock 1972.

41 Practitioners of Mahāsī's method need only reach the stage of "access- or Neighbourhood-Concentration" (*upacāra-samādhi*; Nyanaponika 1970: 89).

42 Mahāsī Sayādaw seems to have considered the attainment of *sotāpatti* a necessary and sufficient condition for becoming an "authorized" teacher of his method. Given the fact that many who attain *sotāpatti* possess neither the time nor the inclination to become teachers, the large number of Mahāsī disciples who are in fact teaching throughout the world illustrates just how common *sotāpatti* has become in the "Mahāsī school."

43 Note that Anagārika Dharmapāla had previously tried to "revive" meditation on the basis of textual materials. He had come upon the *Manual of a Mystic* in 1892, and used that text along with others in formulating his own system of meditation which he then propagated among his lay followers. See Carrithers 1983: 240, and Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 237–238.

44 For an account of the meditation revival in Ceylon see esp. Gombrich 1983; Carrithers 1983: 222–246; and Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 238.

45 One of the prominent Mahāsī centers in Sri Lanka, opened in 1956 at Kanduboda, provides meditation classes in English as well as Sinhalese, making the practice available to foreigners as well (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 238).

46 Although I have mentioned only a handful of contemporary teachers above, the reader should keep in mind that there are several dozen prominent teachers active in Burma, Thailand, and Sri Lanka, many of whom propagate techniques of their own devising based on their personal practice as well as their knowledge of Buddhist scriptural sources. Many such teachers, including Sunlun Sayādaw (1878–1952) in Burma, and Achaan Buddhadāsa (1906–1993) in Thailand, have considerable followings.

47 Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 237; see also Swearer 1970.

48 Bond 1988: 183. Gombrich and Obeyesekere note that "What is printed in Sinhala in newspapers, books, and above all in school textbooks derives largely from the English-language Orientalist view of Buddhism" (1988: 448). Bond similarly notes that "Sinhalese Buddhists accept these foreign teachers and their ideas in the same way and for the same reason that earlier Buddhists accepted Colonel Olcott: Because foreigners who espouse one's own tradition enhance its credibility and increase one's appreciation of it" (Bond 1988: 191).

49 One such case is that of Sunlun Sayādaw (born Maung Kyaw Din); see the account in Kornfield 1977: 85, and King 1980: 138.

50 See the comments in Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 237, and 273.

51 On nineteenth-century *saṃgha* reforms in Korea see Buswell 1992: 25–30. The Korean reforms, which were stimulated by the "New Buddhism" of Japan as well as by anti-colonialist (anti-Japanese) sentiments, were led by intellectuals such Han Yongun (1879–1944). Buswell notes that Yongun's vision of reform was profoundly influenced by both his study of Western thought and his travels abroad. Like his Meiji counterparts, Yongun came to see the Korean Buddhist tradition of his day as "degenerate," and he "called on Korean Buddhism to evolve along what he termed modern, scientific lines, while still drawing from its wellspring in Asian spiritual culture" (Buswell 1992: 26). On the Vietnamese reforms see esp. the remarks by Heinz Bechert and Vu Duy-Tu (1976: 190–193). The Vietnamese Buddhist teacher best known in the West, Thich Nhat Hanh, similarly propounds a somewhat "Protestantized" Buddhism. Thich Nhat Hanh had been a scholar of religion at Van Hanh Buddhist University in Saigon, and was active in the peace movement in Vietnam until barred from re-entry to his country in 1966 after a lecture tour to the West. He was also among the founders of the socially active Tiep Hien Order begun in Vietnam in 1964. Note the first of the Order's fourteen precepts: "Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory or ideology, including Buddhist ones. Buddhist systems of thought must be guiding means and not absolute truth" (*Vajradhatu Sun* Dec. 1985-Jan. 1986: 2). The seventh precept, which enjoins concentration on breathing as well as mindfulness meditation, is considered the "core" of the Tiep Hien precepts.

52 *Dīgha-nikāya* 22, and *Majjhima-nikāya* 10.

53 See, for example, Goleman 1977; Kohn 1987: 65–73, and 1989: 193–195; Omstein 1972; Shapiro 1984: 6; Walsh 1984 and 1993.

54 See the discussions in Bronkhorst 1986; Bucknell 1991; Cousins 1973; Griffiths 1983b; and Stuart-Fox 1989. In addition to scriptural discrepancies over the meaning of the term *jhāna*, there is evidence that contemporary use of the term *vipassanā* diverges significantly from canonical norms. While "access concentration" was traditionally seen as prerequisite for the development of *vipassanā* (Cousins 1973: 123), there was clearly an analytic component to *vipassanā* practice as well: it involved controlled reflection upon (or recollection of) central Buddhist tenets such as impermanence or non-self. This more "discursive" element is lacking in some contemporary techniques that go under the rubric of *vipassanā*, rendering them closer to what would have traditionally been classified as *samatha*. This point has been made by some Asian critics of the *vipassanā* movement (see below).

55 In a recent article on *jhāna*, Roderick Bucknell claims that ethnographic evidence points to just such a consensus, and that this consensus constitutes empirical evidence for Buddhaghosa's account: "It can be fairly readily confirmed that Buddhaghosa's account is generally accurate as a description of the meditative practice. Numerous practicing meditators, particularly in the Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia, routinely experience many of the stages Buddhaghosa describes" (Bucknell 1993: 338). Bucknell immediately goes on to admit, however, that "such meditators and their teachers do not necessarily use Buddhaghosa's terminology; however, some of the stages they describe can be readily recognized and correlated with his account" (ibid.) The main piece of evidence adduced in support of this striking claim is a series of conversations with a meditation master from Bangkok, Chaokhun Rajasiddhimuni (ibid.: n. 28). Bucknell is sufficiently confident of the empirical foundations of Theravāda meditation exercises to suggest that "Researchers wishing to investigate the matter at first hand can do so by taking up intensive meditation themselves. Such experimentation will support the claim that all meditators pass through essentially the same sequence of stages, provided they pursue the practice intensively and persistently enough, in a suitable environment, and with competent guidance" (ibid.:

388–389). As we will see below, there is in fact little agreement among teachers in Southeast Asia as to the identification and designation of specific meditative states. Indeed, the question as to who is able to offer "competent guidance" is a contentious subject among seasoned meditators.

56 The pamphlet is reproduced in part in King 1980: 126–132.

57 See esp. the documents collected in Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization 1979, as well as the discussions in Bond 1988: 162–171; Carrithers 1983: 240–243; and Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 454.

58 Kheminda believed the technique heterodox as it did not follow the traditional three-stage path, consisting of perfection of morality, concentration, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi*, and *paññā*). Kheminda's views were first published in the pages of *World Buddhism*, and are reproduced in part in Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization 1979, along with rejoinders by prominent disciples of Mahāsī Sayādaw. See also Kheminda 1980, and the discussion in Bond 1988: 164–171.

59 Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization 1979: 35. Note also the following: "The Ven. Mahāsī Sayādaw, on the strength not only of Ceylon commentaries, etc. but also of the practical experiences of the yogis, has, with the best of intentions, written the above-mentioned treatise on Buddhist meditation" (ibid.: 29–30).

60 Kassapa 1957: 12, cited in Bond 1988: 170.

61 Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 454. Objections to the Mahāsī method do not emerge from traditionalist quarters alone. I was informed by two teachers associated with U Ba Khin's center in Rangoon that experiences certified as *sotāpatti* by Mahāsī and his disciples are not the real thing. This is noteworthy, as many of U Ba Khin's own disciples are believed to have attained the stage of *sotāpatti*, and thus their objections do not stem from the traditional belief that the attainment of *sotāpatti* is rare. Note also the personal account by Eric Lerner, an American who trained at U Ba Khin's center under his successor Sayama. Lerner recounts how, after a period of training in Burma, he retreated to a forest monastery in Sri Lanka where he experienced what he took to be *sotāpatti*. Upon returning to Burma he was told, much to his chagrin, that it was only a "taste" of *jhāna* and that it was more of a hindrance than a help (Lerner 1977).

62 See also King 1980: 143–144, where he discusses the problems in characterizing Sunlun's technique as either *vipassanā* or *samatha*. Buswell has similar problems in situating Sŏn *hwadu* practice within the "classical" Buddhist schema of *vipassanā-samatha*: "hwadu is not intended to generate a state of samādhi but a state in which *both* the calmness of samādhi and the perspicuity of prajñā are maintained. . . . If one were to try to place the state of mind engendered through kanhwa practice in the stages in Buddhist meditation outlined in the Theravāda school, I believe it would be rather more akin to 'access concentration' (*upacāra-samādhi*), which accompanies ten specific types of discursive contemplations" (Buswell 1992: 159).

63 In U Ba Khin's analysis of Mr. A's *phala* experience, for example, U Ba Khin includes a detailed description of the sequence of Mr. A.'s training, despite the fact that the course of training lasted a mere three days (King 1980: 130–132). The argument is explicit: if the training that led to the experience conformed to canonical descriptions of the path to *nibbāna*, then the resultant experience must indeed have been *nibbāna*. Another contemporary authority, Saddhātissa, warns that even if a meditator finds his sessions improving dramatically, such that "he is attaining trance-like states of concentration," if there is "no change in his daily life . . . it may well be that what he has been calling tranquillity and concentration is, in fact, a state of self-induced hypnotism" (cited in Cousins 1973: 126).

64 There are, in fact, early precedents for the "Watts heresy." According to the T'ang dynasty exegete Tsung-mi (780–841), the Ch'an master Wu-chu (714–774) of the

Pao-t'ang school in Szechwan took the iconoclastic and antinomian rhetoric of Ch'an literally, such that he refused to transmit the precepts and rejected most of the liturgical and ritual procedures considered integral to the monastic tradition. No doubt this contributed to the quick demise of his lineage. See the account in Broughton 1983: 38–40.

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32

THE TRANSFORMING GIFT

An analysis of devotional acts of offering in Buddhist *Āvadāna* literature

John Strong

Source: *History of Religions* 18 (1979): 221–37.

In spite of the enthusiasm of some Western and some Asian scholars for Buddhism as a "rational," "nontheistic," "philosophical," or "scientifically sound" tradition, it has long been clear that Buddhists everywhere and at all times have engaged in religious practices which might easily be characterized by such nonscientific or even theistic terms as "faith," "devotion," and "worship." Numerous texts, as we shall see, tell of the offerings made by devotees to the Buddha, of the marvelous fruits in which these offerings resulted, and of the faith and devotion which engendered them and were confirmed by them. Many of these same acts of offering, of course, still take place everyday throughout Asia, although they are directed to images of the Buddha rather than to the Master in person.

Two concepts—which may well be at odds with each other—are commonly invoked in discussions of these religious meritorious acts. The first is the notion of Buddha-bhakti, that is, of devotion to the figure of the Buddha. The second is the notion of karma. In this article, I shall discuss neither of these concepts, although I do want to assume both of them just as do the texts I propose to examine. I am less concerned here with the motivations for offering than with its "mechanics." Rather than asking *why* Buddhists make offerings to the Buddha or how they can justify doing so when the Buddha is absent in *parinirvāṇa*, I will seek simply to analyze the structure of their acts of offering and of their reputed effects.

To do this, I want to focus on a number of *avadānas* taken mostly from the *Avadānaśataka*, an early anthology of Buddhist tales, the very purpose of which is to illustrate the effectiveness of different kinds of acts of offering.[1] The importance of the *Avadānaśataka* is beyond dispute, as many subsequent *avadāna* collections took the acts of offering it describes as models for their own presentations.[2]

Most of the tales I will discuss here deal with acts of offering which are made to the Buddha in person. Nonetheless they are helpful in understanding offerings which continued to be made to different objects of devotion after the Buddha's death. In this regard, it is useful to preface our consideration of the texts themselves with a few remarks on early Hīnayānist buddhology.

Students of Buddhist doctrine are generally agreed that the earliest theory of the bodies of the Buddha was a twofold one. The Buddha's physical form—his *rūpakāya*—was distinguished from the body of his doctrine—his *dharmakāya*.[3] The one was the actual physical body with which the Buddha was born at Lumbinī, the other was, as Louis de la Vallée Poussin put it, the body of his doctrine, the collection of his teachings, his *pravacanakāya*.[4]

Both of these bodies of the Buddha were thought of as being in some sense "visible." On the one hand, the *rūpakāya* was seen simply with the ordinary eye of flesh (*maṁsacakṣu*); on the other hand, to understand the Buddha's doctrine—specifically to maintain the disciplinary rules and to realize the four noble truths (i.e., to be enlightened)—was to "see the *dharmakāya*," a vision which involved the opening of one's eye of wisdom (*prajñācakṣu*).[5]

With the death and *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha, however, certain problems arose. The body of the Buddha's teachings—his *dharmakāya*—presented no difficulties, it was gathered together at the first Buddhist council where the *sutta* and *vinaya* were recited, and so was preserved and passed on to the community of monks. The Buddha's physical *rūpakāya*, however, passed away and was seen no more. Some groups, to be sure, identified the *rūpakāya* with the Buddha's relics and, as we shall see, there arose several ways in which, in some manner, it was thought possible still to have a vision of the Buddha's physical form. But inescapably the *parinirvāṇa* principally signified the dissolution of the Buddha's physical form, and even his relics, made over to the lay kings, were dispersed and eventually spread throughout the cosmos "like mustard seed," so small as to be invisible.[6]

Given this situation, at least two groups in early Buddhism appear to have chosen to identify the *dharmakāya* exclusively with the *whole* of the Buddha. First, there were certain elitist monks who, at least in some Pali canonical texts, show little concern for the relics of the Buddha which they leave to the laity; instead, as inheritors of the Buddha's teachings, they claim that "he who sees the Dharma sees the Buddha."[7] Second, in curious alliance with them perhaps, we find the followers of the early Perfection of Wisdom school. Indeed, in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā* those who would adhere to the Tathāgata through his form-body (*rūpakāya*) rather than through his dharma-body are labeled "foolish" and "ignorant," "for a Tathāgata cannot be seen from his form-body."[8]

Along with such views, there arose in some circles a veritable denigration of the vision of the Buddha's physical body, even in his own lifetime. A story in the *Karmavibhangopadeśa* makes this clear: Two *bhikṣus* set out to visit the Buddha in Ayodhya, but in order to get there they have to cross a great forest. They walk and walk; thirst comes upon them. Finally they come across some

water. One of the monks drinks, but the other declares that he will not violate the dharma and vinaya by partaking of nonfiltered water which contains life. And significantly he adds: "The Dharma of the Buddha is his body: if I uphold the Dharma, I will see the Blessed One himself." As a result of his strict adherence to the rule, however, he dies of thirst and is reborn among the gods. His companion travels on and finally arrives in Ayodhya, where he is granted an audience with the Blessed One. There he finds that his friend, as a deity, has already arrived and had his vision of the Buddha's *dharmakāya*. But to him, because he drank unfiltered water, the Buddha shows only the body which he received from his parents (*mātāpitṛsambhavam śarīram*), that is, his physical *rūpakāya*. The Buddha adds in his explanation that although the monk "saw the body which I received from my parents, he did not see me."[9]

In spite of these and other denigrations of the purely physical dimension, however, it is clear that in more bhakti-oriented Buddhist groups such as the Sarvāstivādins, the *rūpakāya* maintained its own attraction. In fact, in certain *avadāna* texts, "wisdom" (i.e., a vision of the Buddha's *dharmakāya*) was not thought to be enough, even for a monk. A total experience of the Buddha necessitated a vision of his *rūpakāya* as well. In the first chapter of the *Divyāvadāna*, for example, we are told that Śroṇa Koṭikarṇa had, under his teacher Mahākātyāyana, studied the three *piṭakas*, abandoned the defilements, and attained arhatship. Nonetheless he longs to venerate the Buddha in the flesh and asks his teacher for permission to go and see him: "Thanks to my teacher, I have seen the Blessed One in his *dharmakāya* but not in his *rūpakāya*. Master, I want to go see the Blessed One also in his *rūpakāya*." And his teacher grants him permission: "Do so, my child, for Tathāgata Arhat Samyaksambuddhas are as difficult to meet as the flower of the Uḍumbara."[10]

Similarly, in the *Aśokāvadāna*, the elder Upagupta laments that although he, as an enlightened arhat, has seen the Dharma-body of the Buddha he has never seen his *rūpakāya*, since he is living 100 years after the *parinirvāṇa*. He therefore requests Māra to take on the physical form of the Buddha and show it to him, a vision which sends him into an ecstasy of bhakti.[11] In these *avadānas*, then, a total experience of the Buddha appears to involve a double vision focusing in some way on the Blessed One's *rūpakāya* on the one hand, and on his *dharmakāya* on the other.

The Buddha, however, was not the only person to have two such bodies. In Aśvaghoṣa's *Sūtrālaṁkāra*, for example, we read of a *caṇḍala* layman who was enlightened and who refuses to carry out the king's order to execute a condemned criminal since killing is against the Buddhist way. When the king becomes furious with him, the *caṇḍala* is unruffled, for, as he puts it, although the king may well torture and imprison his physical *rūpakāya*, he cannot touch his *dharmakāya* which he has acquired by virtue of his enlightenment.[12] In the *Kunālāvadāna*, which tells the story of the blinding of King Aśoka's son, the same theme is played out in terms of Kunāla's two eyes: his physical eye which is gouged out and his dharma eye which is not.[13]

Finally, in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, we read how, by meditation on the Dharma, a monk creates a spiritual body which is in his physical body like a sword in a sheath.[14]

It would appear, then, that not only does the awakening to enlightenment involve a vision of the Buddha's *dharmakāya*, it also marks the attainment of one's own *dharmakāya*, a "body" which is contrasted with one's own physical form. The Buddha's *rūpakāya* and *dharmakāya*, therefore, merely establish the paradigm for a much broader polarity which extends to all other beings as well.[15] Frank Reynolds, in a recent article on the doctrine of the Buddha bodies within the Theravāda tradition, confirms this when he speaks of two whole dimensions of Buddhist practice: the one stemming from the "*dhammakāya* legacy" and the other from the "*rūpakāya* legacy."[16]

In what follows, therefore, I would like to speak more generally about what might be called the "rupalogical" and "dharmalogical" dimensions of Buddhist practice, especially of acts of offering. As we shall see, it is one of the contentions of this article that acts of offering, at least as they are described in early *avadāna* texts, involve both dimensions, and this not only in the acts themselves but in their results and in the figure of the Buddha—the object of devotion—toward which they are directed. This will become clearer as we turn now to examine the offerings described in one of the earliest Sarvāstivāda collections of Buddhist tales, the *Avadānaśataka*.

Offerings in the Avadānaśataka

As its title indicates, the *Avadānaśataka* is an anthology of 100 *avadānas* or stories of acts which lead to enlightenment. It may be assigned "with some degree of certainty" to the second century A.D.[17] Unlike the *Divyāvadāna* and other collections, the *Avadānaśataka* is, as an anthology, very systematically organized. It is divided into ten chapters of ten tales, each decad being devoted to a particular type of *avadāna*. One of the striking things about these stories is that in them very simple acts of devotion and offering are said to lead an individual to great results: either Buddahood, Pratyekabuddhahood or arhatship.[18] For example, the tales in the first decad recount simple gifts of flowers, food, incense, etc., made by rather ordinary individuals (merchants, householders, gardeners, children, guildmasters), as a result of which they are told they will become fully enlightened Buddhas in the future. Exactly the same type of stories may be found in the third decad, except that the "heroes" become Pratyekabuddhas instead of Buddhas. By far the bulk of the tales, however, recount acts of devotion by which ordinary persons are said to have attained arhatship.[19]

Ever since the time of Léon Feer it has been common to distinguish within these various types of stories two basic genres of *avadānas:* (1) *avadānas* of the past and (2) *avadānas* of the future or *vyākaraṇas*.[20] The first type is found predominantly in those stories of the *Avadānaśataka* which recount acts leading to arhatship. These customarily begin with a narrative of the "present" which

describes an individual's birth, his meeting with the Buddha, initiation into the community, and immediate attainment of arhatship. This achievement so amazes the *bhikṣus* that they question the Buddha about it. The Buddha then explains it as being the result of that individual's act of offering in a past life which he then recounts. The offering thus actually takes place in a "past" life, and its fruits are realized in the "present" life.

The second type—the *vyākaraṇas*—are found predominantly in the stories which tell of acts leading to Buddhahood or Pratyekabuddhahood. These also customarily begin with the narrative of the "present" which describes an individual's act of devoted offering to the Buddha, after which the Buddha makes a prediction (*vyākaraṇa*) that that person will attain Buddhahood or Pratyekabuddhahood at such and such time in the "future." Thus, in these stories, the act of offering takes place in the "present" and its fruit is in the "future."

Feer has made much of these differences, wondering whether "arhatship in hand" is worth more or less than "Buddhahood in the future."[21] However, we should not take these temporal distinctions too seriously. What is important is the structure of the act and of its fruit, not the order in which the story is told.

The fact that Buddhahood and Pratyekabuddhahood are not actually pictured as attained in the "present" may be readily explained by simple doctrinal considerations: the acts of offering leading to them are performed in the presence of the Buddha, and, as it is well known, there can never be more than a single Buddha alive in any one era, and never any Pratyekabuddhas present when that single Buddha is alive.

Moreover, we should remember that the *Avadānaśataka* was a work of the Sarvāstivādins—a school which was identified by its affirmation of the existence of everything in the three modes of time, past, present, and future.[22] The relationship between this school's philosophical "pan-realism"[23] and its more popular traditions is a difficult matter to assess. Still, it is significant that one of the arguments used by the Sarvāstivādins in support of their view was that only if the past and the future exist could karmic retribution be effective.[24]

Dharmas, according to their theory, exist eternally as realities (*dravya*), but they travel through the modes (*bhava*) of the three times. Thus an entity does not really arise and disappear but wanders from the future into the present and into the past. This makes for a somewhat paradoxical world view in which things which exist in the present "used to exist" in the future and "will soon exist" in the past.[25]

The perception and prediction of the future, then, which plays such an important role in the *Avadānaśataka*, is not a matter of guessing or knowing what has not yet come to be; it is not finally related to ontology at all but is a power of transcending temporal modes, of seeing "that which exists" (*dravya*) in any mode but which is "at present" in a future mode. In this it is analogous to the perception and recall of the past which is not a matter of remembering what *was* but of seeing that which exists but is "at present" in the past mode.

Thus, we should not strive to see great differences between the different types

of acts of offering in the *Avadānaśataka* on the basis of the time period in which their fruits are realized. If the act *is* in the past, the fruit *is* in the present; if the act *is* in the present, the fruit *is* in the future. This has nothing to do with ontology but is just a matter of where acts and fruits are "caught" in the three modes of time. What is important is not the actuality of acts and fruit but the demonstration of the relationship between them.

All of this will become clearer as we turn now to some specific examples of offerings from the *Avadānaśataka*.

As we have mentioned, one of the striking things about many of the stories in the *Avadānaśataka* collection is that the acts they recount are really quite trivial and appear incommensurate with the results to which they are said to lead.

In *Avadānaśataka* 7, for example, a gardener gives a lotus to the Buddha and thereby attains Buddhahood in the future. In *avadāna* 29, another gardener brings the Buddha a toothstick and thereby will experience Pratyekabodhi. In *Avadānaśataka* 61, a householder sees a golden mirror which had fallen off the stupa of the former Buddha Vipaśyī; he hangs it back on and so attains arhatship in the present life. In *Avadānaśataka* 77, the wife of a merchant offers a necklace of pearls to the past Buddha Kāśyapa and thereby becomes an arhatī under the present Buddha. In *avadāna* 83, a gambler gives two *dināras* to a stupa in a past life and becomes enlightened in his present life.[26]

These examples could be multiplied. What is striking in them is the apparent discrepancy between act and fruit. This disproportion is even wondered at in some of the texts themselves: "Oh the Buddha! Oh the Dharma! Oh the Sangha! When an apparently small act is performed towards them, there is a great fruit!"[27] There is a sense, then, that something more than the normal operation of the law of karma is at work here. The question is "How can this discrepancy be accounted for?"

Rereading the stories more carefully, one notices several things. First of all, the gardener who gives a lotus (*padma*) to the Buddha does not just attain Buddhahood in the future; he becomes specifically the Buddha Padmottama ("Best of Lotusses"), the etymology of whose name is in direct correspondence with the nature of his acts of offspring.[28] The pattern can be found throughout the *Avadānaśataka*. The gardener who gives a toothstick becomes the Pratyekabuddha Nirmala ("Stainless"). The house-holder who sets the golden mirror back on the Vipaśyi stupa is reborn with a body which is brilliant as gold and lights up the whole city of Kapilavastu with its luster, causing his parents to give him the name Suvarnābha ("Brilliant with gold"). The woman who offers pearls to Kāśyapa is reborn with a garland of pearls on her head and so is called Muktā ("Pearl"), while the gambler who gives two golden *dināras* to the stupa of Kāśyapa is born with two gold coins in his hands and called Hiranyapāṇi ("Gold coinhands").[29]

In all of these stories, then, there is a direct correspondence—not necessarily between the physical act of devotion and the attainment of enlightened wisdom but between the physical act and the name (*nāma*) and physical form (*rūpakāya*)

that the individual acquires at the time of his enlightenment. To the rupalogical act, then, corresponds a specific rupalogical fruit.

If this is the case, a second question then immediately arises: What act accounts for the dharmalogical fruit of *bodhi, pratyeka-bodhi*, or arhatship? The answer again involves a return to the texts.

It does not take long to notice that, generally speaking, an act of offering in the *Avadānaśataka* consists not just of a physical presentation of a gift but that this is accompanied by the formulation of a *praṇidhāna;* that is, as Franklin Edgerton defines it, "a fixation of the mind, an ardent desire, earnest wish or vow . . . most commonly to win enlightenment."[30] The *praṇidhāna* is, of course, in the Mahāyāna an important feature in the bodhisattva's career, often becoming quite elaborate and extravagant.[31] But in the *Avadānaśataka* it remains simple and stereotyped, and, what is important, it is formulated not just by future Buddhas but by future Pratyekabuddhas and arhats as well. In this basic and more widespread form, the *praṇidhāna* then is primarily simply a verbal expression of an inner intent for enlightenment.

Thus, for example, the gardener of *Avadānaśataka* 7, upon offering his lotus to the Buddha, falls on his face and, his hands cupped in devotion, with his mind set, he makes this vow: "May I, by this root of merit, by this production of thought and by this renunciation according to the law of giving become a Buddha in this world."[32] The *praṇidhāna* of the Pratyekabuddha-to-be in *Avadānaśataka* 29 is even simpler. Upon offering his toothstick to the Buddha, he falls at his feet and full of faith says: "May I, by this root of merit, experience *pratyekabodhi*."[33]

In *Avadānaśataka* 61, the man who hangs the golden mirror back on the Vipaśyī stupa makes a *praṇidhāna* to be reborn and attain arhatship under a teacher with qualities similar to those of Vipaśyī (i.e., under another Buddha).[34] The same wish is formulated by the merchant's wife upon giving the pearl necklace to Kāśyapa and is found throughout the last four decads of the *Avadānaśataka*, where most often it takes the form of a desire for initiation and dharmalogical instruction in the future.[35] To this is added the specific wish for arhatship. For example, in *Avadānaśataka* 72, a young slave girl offers rice to a past Buddha and says: "May I, by this root of merit, by this production of thought . . . be initiated in the presence of the Blessed Śākyamuni and attain arhatship."[36]

The effectiveness of these *praṇidhānas* is clearly attested to in the texts themselves; there, we are repeatedly told that it was because of so-and-so's *praṇidhāna* that he achieved his particular dharmalogical enlightenment, that is, his *dharmakāya*—whether that be as a Samyaksaṁbuddha, a Pratyekabuddha, or an arhat. Moreover, at the same time these acts and achievements in the dharmalogical dimension are distinguished from those in the rupalogical sphere. For at the end of almost every story in the *Avadānaśataka*, the *bhikṣus* who have been listening to the tale "conceive doubts" and ask the Buddha two questions. First, they want to know why the particular hero on whom the story has just focused

was "born with gold coins in his hands," or was "born with a body brilliant as gold," or was called "Pearl," etc. Second, they want to know why that same person attained enlightenment.

The Buddha's answer is invariably the same. First he explains that it is because so-and-so made such-and-such a physical offering that he attained a particular *rūpakāya* which is invariably in direct correlation with the individual's name. Second, it is because that same individual made a *praṇidhāna* that he attained enlightenment.

Thus, for example, in the case of the householder who sets the golden mirror back on the Vipaśyī stupa, the Buddha says: "What do you think, *bhikṣus?* He who was at that time the householder, he is now this Suvarnābha. Because he honored the stupa of the Samyaksaṁbuddha Vipaśyī, he has attained particularities of form (*rūpaviśeṣa*) of such a kind; and because he made a *praṇidhāna*, even in this birth he has experienced arhatship."[37] Exactly the same kind of explanation figures in the stories of the gambler who gave two coins to the stupa of Vipaśyī, of Muktā who offered her pearl necklace to Kāśyapa,[38] and may be found in the great majority of the stories of acts leading to arhatship.[39]

The constant and stereotypical repetition of these explanations is important, for it shows that within the texts themselves there is an attempt to distinguish between the two basic dimensions of the *avadāna* in terms of both the act itself and of its fruit. This is enough to justify an initial portrayal of the structure of the act of offering as shown in figure 1.

This distinction between the rupalogical and dharmalogical dimensions of the act of offering helps put in a new light the question of its structure, but there are clearly some additional elements involved. A meritorious act of offering does not only have an eventual fruit lifetimes—perhaps aeons—later. It also has what might be called an "immediate effect."

Obviously, much of the effectiveness of the act itself is related to the object of devotion toward which it is directed, the field of merit in which it is planted. This may be a past Buddha, a stupa, an image, a Bodhi tree, a Pratyekabuddha, a member of the Sangha, etc., although in the vast majority of the cases in the *Avadānaśataka* it is the Buddha himself.

The importance of the Buddha as field of merit in any Buddhist devotional act is, of course, well known. What is particularly interesting in the stories in the *Avadānaśataka* is that the rupalogical gifts offered and the dharmalogical *praṇidhānas* made are not simply directed toward the Buddha; they also occa-

DIMENSION	*ACT*	*FRUIT*
Rupalogical	Physical offering	One's own *rūpakāya*
Dharmalogical	*Praṇidhāna*	One's own *dharmakāya*

Figure 1 The two dimensions of the act of offering.

sion a rather intriguing series of responses and transformations on the part of the Buddha as field of merit. It is in these "response-transformations" that we find the "immediate effect" or reaction of the act of offering. As will be evident, this may be thought of in cosmological terms, in experimental terms, or even in magical-mystical terms; but however it is interpreted, it is clear that the two dimensions which we have just detected in the act of offering and in its fruit are distinguished in terms of its immediate effect as well. The physical act of offering is followed immediately by a rupalogical response-transformation involving the physical offering itself and the Buddha as the field of merit, while the *praṇidhāna* is followed by a rather spectacular response-transformation which highlights the whole dharmalogical dimension.

Let us return again to the texts. We find, for example, in *Avadānaśataka* 7, that the lotus which the gardener offers to the Buddha does not remain an ordinary lotus for very long. The Buddha's acceptance of it magically transforms its form, and it in turn reveals or highlights the Buddha's form: taking on the dimensions of a cart wheel, the lotus rises up into the air above the Buddha's head, and, remaining suspended, follows the Buddha wherever he goes, stopping when he stops.[40]

The same phenomenon of a flower or other offering "crowning" or ornamenting the body of the Buddha is found repeatedly throughout the text. For example, in *Avadānaśataka* 1, Pūrṇa offers some flowers which are transformed immediately into a flowery pavilion (*puṣpamaṇḍapa*) which magically remains suspended about the Buddha.[41] In *Avadānaśataka* 2, the jewels offered by Yaśomati fly into the air and form a parasol of precious stones (*ratnacchattra*) over the Blessed One's head.[42] In the story of the Pratyekabuddha-to-be gardener who offers a toothstick to the Buddha, the theme of transformation of the gift and the whole milieu of offering is presented even more radically. The Blessed One accepts the toothstick, chews it, and spits it out on the earth where it immediately takes root, grows, and blossoms into a great circular banyan tree (*mahānyagrodaḥ parimaṇḍala*) under which the Buddha then sits and preaches a sermon.[43]

These various occurrences are called "miracles" (*prātiharya*) in the texts; it is clear, however, that they are miracles in the rupalogical dimension. Not only is the physical appearance of each offering transformed, so is the whole physical setting—the sphere of form (*rūpadhātu*) in which the act takes place.[44] This transformed setting which results from the simple gift is significant for it constitutes an immediate—if temporary—visible sign of the effectiveness of the offering when directed toward a field of merit such as the Buddha. At the same time, the offering, by crowning or ornamenting the Buddha's *rūpakāya*, reveals its full dimension and glory. The devotee sees before him a new field of merit transforming and transformed by his simple act of offering.[45]

It is in this new transformed rupalogical situation that the vow for Buddhahood, Pratyekabuddhahood or arhatship—the dharmalogical *praṇidhāna*—is then made. We find consistently in the *Avadānaśataka* a definite sense of

progression from the rupalogical act of offering to the experience of the response-transformation, and then on to the dharmalogical act itself which would appear (although this is not stated) to be at least in part inspired by the miracle of that response-transformation. The progression, however, does not stop here, for immediately the making of the *praṇidhāna*, whatever its motivation, entails a new set of transformations: the Buddha is said to respond with a smile and a prediction (*vyākaraṇa*).[46]

The smile of the Buddha is, of course, no ordinary smile. The description of what happens as a result of it takes up several pages in each *avadāna* where it is repeated. Brilliant rays of light of many different colors leave the Blessed One's mouth, some heading downward, the other upward. The rays which go downward penetrate into all of the various hells, and "becoming warm they enter the hells which are cold, and becoming cool they enter the hells which are hot; thus they allay the various ordeals of the beings there." At this, the hell-beings wonder what is happening. In order to engender their faith, the Buddha then projects magical forms of himself into each of the hells. Each of these magical creations gives hope to the hell-beings and preaches the Dharma to them. They become full of faith and "casting off the ordeal to be suffered in hell they attain rebirth among the gods and among men where they become vessels of the truths."[47]

Meanwhile, the rays which go upward enter all of the various heavens and proclaim to the deities the impermanence, emptiness, nonself, and suffering inherent in their blissful state, and exhort them with two well-known stanzas: "Commence, go forth! Yoke yourselves to the Buddha's teaching. Shake up the army of death like an elephant a reed hut. For whoever will go forth, attentive to the discipline of Dharma, will bring an end to suffering and abandon this cycle of birth."[48]

After thus preaching to the deities and hell-beings throughout the great trichiliochosm, the rays return to the Buddha and reenter his body at one of several points, the exact spot depending, significantly, on the dharmalogical destiny of the individual who made the *praṇidhāna* that occasioned the smile in the first place. Thus, if that individual is to attain *anuttara samyaksaṁbodhi*, the rays disappear into the Buddha's *uṣṇīṣa*; if he is to attain *pratyekabodhi*, they disappear into his *ūrṇā*; if it is to be arhatship, they disappear into his mouth; and so on down the cosmic hierarchy with the destiny of the gods corresponding to the Buddha's navel, the different kinds of cakravartin to his two palms, the human realm to his knees, and the animal, preta, and hell realms to his heels, toes, and soles.[49]

Paul Mus is one of the few scholars who has sought to interpret this schema of the Buddha's smile. In several of his works, he treats it as a specifically Buddhist reworking of the cosmological and sacrificial themes of the *Puruṣa sūkta* (*Ṛg veda* 10.90). Just as the various parts of the body of Puruṣa are put in relationship with the various classes of beings, so too here the different parts of the body of the Buddha (viewed as *mahāpuruṣa*) are identified with the various classes of creatures that make up the Buddhist cosmos.[50]

It is important, however, to see how these cosmological aspects of the Buddha's smile intersect here with the dharmalogical dimension. The rays which emanate from the Buddha's mouth are visible manifestations of the Buddha's Word—his teachings, his Dharma. The immediate effect of the smile for the devotee, therefore, is a vision of the Buddha's Dharma-body—one which extends throughout the whole cosmos from the hells to the heavens.

At the same time, the reentry of the rays into the Buddha also reveals the precise extent or scope of the individual's own dharmalogical potential. This calibration is important. In the *Avadānaśataka*, there are few outward differences between the physical acts and the *praṇidhānas* which are said to lead to Buddhahood and those which are said to lead to Pratyekabuddahood or arhatship. The inner differences, however, are measured in terms of the immediate effect of the Buddha's smile and the return of the rays. In terms of measurement on the Buddha's cosmic body, devotees who will become completely enlightened Buddhas themselves (and for whom the rays of the smile thus reenter the highest point on the Buddha, his *uṣṇīṣa*) are immediately seen to have the greatest dharmalogical potential. Future Pratyekabuddhas have the next greatest, and so on down to the hell-beings for whom the rays of the smile reenter the soles of the cosmic Buddha's feet and who are thereby seen to have almost no dharmalogical potential at all.

Of course, the smile, like the creation of the new rupalogical sphere, is only a temporary, immediate effect of the act of offering. But it makes explicit the inner potentiality of the devotee, and the rest is just a matter of working out that potential over a myriad of lifetimes until the fruit is attained.

It is now possible to complete our chart of the structure of the act of offering, as in figure 2.

The acts of offering which we have examined in this paper are typical of *avadāna* literature in general—a literature which developed in the Sanskrit, Sarvāstivāda milieu of Northwestern India and which is, in a sense, caught between Theravāda Buḍdhism on the one hand and Mahāyāna traditions on the other. It remains to be seen to what extent the structure of offering we have found in them may be applicable to these other Buddhist traditions. A great many complications enter the scheme: the possibilities of rebirth in a Pure Land, the

DIMENSION	*ACT*	*IMMEDIATE EFFECT*	*FRUIT*
Rupalogical	Physical offering	Rupalogical transformation: of Buddha/ of offering/ of ritual milieu	One's own *rūpakāya*
Dharmalogical	*Praṇidhāna*	Dharmalogical transformation: of Buddha/ of cosmos Guarantee of *praṇidhāna*	One's own *dharmakāya*

Figure 2 The structure of the act of offering.

chances of returning under the future Buddha Maitreya, the changes that come about when the gifts are sermons rather than tangible "things" or when offerings are made to the Sangha or to stupas or Buddha images instead of the Buddha in person. But it is hoped that by analyzing acts of offering in terms of their rupalogical and dharmalogical dimensions, by focusing on their double immediate cosmological effects as well as their eventual building of the individual's *rūpakāya* and *dharmakāya*, it may be possible to trace not only the development of offering in other traditions but their variance from one another as well.

Notes

1 *Avadāna-śatakam*, ed. P. L. Vaidya, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, no. 19 (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1959). Cf. Léon Feer, trans., *Avadāna-çataka: Cent légendes bouddhiques*, Annales du Musée Guimet, vol. 18 (Paris: E. Leroux, 1891). For a survey of Buddhist *avadāna* literature in Sanskrit, see Maurice Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, trans. Mrs. S. Ketkar, 3 vols. (Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1933), 2: 277–94.

2 For a presentation of the relation of the *Avadānaśataka* to other *avadāna* collections, see K. Takahata, *The Ratnamālāvadāna* (Tokyo: Tōyō Bunko, 1954), pp. viii–ix.

3 See Nalinaksha Dutt, *Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Its Relation to the Hīnayāna* (London: Luzac & Co., 1930), pp. 96 ff.; Louis de La Vallée Poussin, "Note sur les corps du Bouddha," *Le Muséon* 14 (1913): 257–90; Akanuma Chizen, "The Triple Body of the Buddha," *Eastern Buddhist* 2 (1922): 1–29; Nagao Gadjin, "On the Theory of Buddha-Body (Buddha-kāya)," *Eastern Buddhist* 6 (1973): 25–53; Lewis R. Lancaster, "An Early Mahāyāna Sermon about the Body of the Buddha and the Making of Images," *Artibus Asiae* 36 (1974): 287–91; and especially Paul Demiéville, "Busshin," in *Hōbōgirin*, ed. S. Lévi, J. Takakusu, and P. Demiéville (Paris: A. Maisonneuve, 1934), p. 176.

4 Louis de La Vallée Poussin, "Appendice iii: Notes sur les corps du Bouddha," in *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi, la siddhi de Hiuan-tsang*, Buddhica, vol. 5 (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1929), p. 766. Later buddhological speculation, of course, was to develop this notion of the *dharmakāya* in various complex ways, but it is important to note that the early notion of the *dharmakāya* as simply the collection of the Buddha's teachings and of his disciplinary rules was never entirely forgotten. See Paul Masson-Oursel, "Les trois corps du Bouddha," *Journal asiatique* 1 (1913): 581–618.

5 On the correspondence between the different bodies and different eyes, see Maryla Falk, *Nāma-Rūpa and Dharma-Rūpa* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1943), pp. 114–15.

6 Demiéville, p. 176. For Mātṛceṭa's lament at the passing and dispersal of the Buddha's physical body, see Sylvain Lévi, "Textes sanscrits de Touen-houang," *Journal asiatique* 16 (1910): 433–56, esp. 455.

7 *Itivuttaka*, ed. Ernst Windisch (London: H. Frowde, 1889), p. 91. Cf. F. L. Woodward, trans., *Itivuttaka: As It Was Said*, The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon, pt. 2, Sacred Books of the Buddhists, vol. 8 (London: Oxford University Press, 1048), p. 181. See also *The Milindapañho*, ed. V. Trencker (London: Williams & Norgate, 1880), p. 71. Cf. T. W. Rhys Davids, trans., *The Questions of King Milinda*, 2 vols., Sacred Books of the East, vols. 35–36 (1890; reprint ed., New York: Dover, 1963), 1:110.

8 Edward Conze, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and Its Verse Summary* (Bolinas, Calif.: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973), pp. 291–92. Earlier when

the question is asked "Which is better: a Jambudvipa filled with relics or one written copy of the perfection of wisdom?" the answer is unequivocal. "The perfection of wisdom . . . Because in a true sense this is the body of the Tathāgatas. As the Lord has said 'The Dharma-bodies are the Buddhas, the Lords. But monks, you should not think that this individual body is my body. Monks, you should see Me from the accomplishment of the Dharma-body.' "

9 Sylvain Lévi, ed. and trans., *Mahākarmavibhanga et Karmavibhangopadesa* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1932), p. 160 (text) and pp. 174–75 (trans.). For similar stories, see T. W. Rhys Davids and Hermann Oldenberg, trans., *Vinaya Texts*, 3 vols., Sacred Books of the East, vols. 13, 17, 20 (1885; reprint ed., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), 3:100; and E. B. Cowell et al., eds. and trans., *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, 6 vols. (1895; reprint ed., London: Luzac & Co., 1969), 1:76–77; and J. Takakusu, *I-tsing's Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), p. 32.

10 *Divyāvadānam*, ed. P. L. Vaidya, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, no. 20 (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1959), pp. 11–12. The Uḍumbara was thought to flower only once every 3,000 years and so became a metaphor for a rare event.

11 *The Aśokāvadāna*, ed. Sujitkumar Mukhopadhyaya (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1963), p. 23. Cf. Ernst Windisch, *Māra und Buddha* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1895), p. 171. In addition to this risky technique of asking Māra to exhibit the *rūpakāya*, the *avadānas* describe several other ways in which an idea of the Buddha's physical form could be attained, in spite of the *parinirvāṇa*. One was by asking other superhuman witnesses who had seen the Buddha while he was alive to describe him in detail. King Aśoka, for example, does this at Lumbinī where he asks the tree goddess "who saw the Blessed One being born" to describe in detail the physical splendor of the Tathāgata (see *Aśokāvadāna*, pp. 82–83). This then sends Aśoka into a state of ecstasy not unlike that experienced by Upagupta above. The same thing happens again when Aśoka encounters not a deity but the monk Piṇḍolabharadvāja, a disciple of the Buddha who had not died but was to remain on earth specifically as a living witness to the time of the Tathāgata. Piṇḍola not only describes the Buddha's body for Aśoka but he, in a sense, becomes the Buddha for him—at least temporarily. With the form of the Buddha in mind, Aśoka, filled with bhakti, bows down to Piṇḍola and says: "Seeing you today, I see the Tathāgata even though he is gone beyond" (see John Strong, "The Legend of the Lion-Roarer: A Study of the Buddhist Arhat Piṇḍola Bharadvāja" [forthcoming in *Numen*]). It is easy to see the connection of this interest in the physical form of the Buddha with the development of his iconography, the worship of the Buddha image, and later the popularity of the Pure Lands.

12 Aśvaghoṣa, *Sūtrālaṃkāra*, trans. Edouard Huber (Paris: E. Leroux, 1908), p. 217.

13 *Aśokāvadāna*, p. 115. See also G.-M. Bongard-Levin and O. F. Volkova, eds., *The Kunāla Legend and an Unpublished Aśokāvadānamālā Manuscript* (Calcutta: Indian Studies Past and Present, 1965), p. 26, and the discussion in John Strong, "Making Merit in the *Aśokāvadāna*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1977), pp. 243 ff.

14 *Dīgha Nikāya*, 3 vols., ed. T. W. Rhys Davids and J. Eslin Carpenter (London: H. Frowde, 1890–1911), 2:83. Cf. T. W. and C. A. F. Rhys Davids, trans., *The Dialogues of the Buddha*, 3 vols., Sacred Books of the Buddhists, vols. 2–4 (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), 2:88; see also O. Stein, "Notes on the Trikāya Doctrine," *Jhā Commemoration Volume*, Poona Oriental Series, no. 39 (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1937), p. 392.

15 For a discussion in a different vein of variations in this polarity, see Falk (n. 5 above), passim.

16 Frank E. Reynolds, "The Several Bodies of the Buddha: Reflections on a Neglected Aspect of Theravāda Tradition," *History of Religions* 16 (1977): 377.

17 Winternitz (n. 1 above), 2:279.
18 Two of the decads are devoted to stories of individuals who are reborn as *pretas* and *devas*, but, as I have shown elsewhere, the eventual goal of these beings too is arhatship (see Strong, "Making Merit," pp. 104 ff).
19 There are some distinctions made between types of arhats, however. Those in chap. 7 are all members of the Sakya clan; those in chap. 8 are all women (arhatīs); those in chap. 9 are all blameless individuals, etc. See Feer (n. 1 above), p. xv, and W. G. Weeraratne, "Avadāna," *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, ed. G. P. Malalasekera (Colombo: Government Publications, 1966), p. 399.
20 Feer, p. xii, and "Le Karma-śataka," *Journal asiatique* 17 (1901): 55.
21 Léon Feer, "Comment on devient Buddha," *Journal asiatique* 16 (1880): 486–514, esp. 491.
22 See André Bareau, "The Notion of Time in Early Buddhism," *East and West* 7 (1956): 353–64.
23 Edward Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), p. 138.
24 Ibid., p. 139; see also Etienne Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisms indien*, Bibliothèque du Muséon (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1958), 43:666.
25 This is, to be sure, a rather simplistic explanation; the whole doctrine must be applied within the context of *anātman* theories and in the light of a soteriological understanding of *nirvāṇa* as not annihilation but simply as the fact that everything in one's personal continuum *is* past (see Conze, *Buddhist Thought*, p. 139).
26 *Avadāna-śatakam*, pp. 18, 73, 155, 190, 239.
27 Ibid., p. 147.
28 Ibid., p. 20.
29 Ibid., pp. 73, 155, 190, 239.
30 Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, s. v. "praṇidhāna" (1953; reprint ed., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972).
31 Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1932), p. 64.
32 *Avadāna-śatakam*, p. 18.
33 Ibid., p. 73.
34 Ibid., p. 156.
35 See, for example, *Avadāna-śatakam*, nos. 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 69, 70, 74, etc.
36 Ibid., p. 180.
37 Ibid., p. 157.
38 Ibid., pp. 208, 191–92.
39 In the stories of future Buddhas and Pratyekabuddhas, instead of this explanation of the past we find the prediction of the future (*vyākaraṇa*). But this stereotyped prediction picks up and repeats the very words of the *praṇidhāna*, which is instrumental in leading to the dharmalogical achievement of Buddhahood or Pratyekabuddhahood.
40 *Avadāna-śatakam*, pp. 18–19.
41 Ibid., p. 1.
42 Ibid., p. 5; see also pp. 18, 23, 57, etc.
43 Ibid., p. 73.
44 For a discussion of early conceptions of the *rūpadhātu*, see Falk, pp. 97 ff.
45 It is easy to see here how, within the rupalogical dimension, there could arise the various notions of the Buddha's transformation body, whether that be conceived of as a "*manomayakāya*," a *nirmita-kāya*, or a *nirmāṇakāya* (see ibid., p. 114).
46 In the usual bodhisattva career, the prediction (*vyākaraṇa*) is, of course, the normal response of the Buddha to the making of a *praṇidhāna* by a future Buddha (see Dayal, p. 67).

47 *Avadāna-śatakam*, p. 297.

48 These verses were written on the wall in the entrance of monasteries in India next to the depiction of the Wheel of Life (see *Divyāvadānam*, p. 186). They also occur prominently in the Sanskrit Dharmapada (see Emile Sénart, "Le manuscrit kharosthi du Dhammapada; les fragments Dutreuil de Rhins," *Journal asiatique* 12 [1898]: 193–308, esp. 208).

49 *Avadāna-śatakam*, p. 297.

50 Paul Mus, "Où finit Puruṣa?" *Mélanges d'indianisme à la mémoire de Louis Renou* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1968), pp. 539–63; "Le sourire d'Angkor: Art, foī et politique bouddhiques sous Jayavarman VII," *Artibus Asiae* 24 (1961): 363–81.